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A PSYCHIC SPY?

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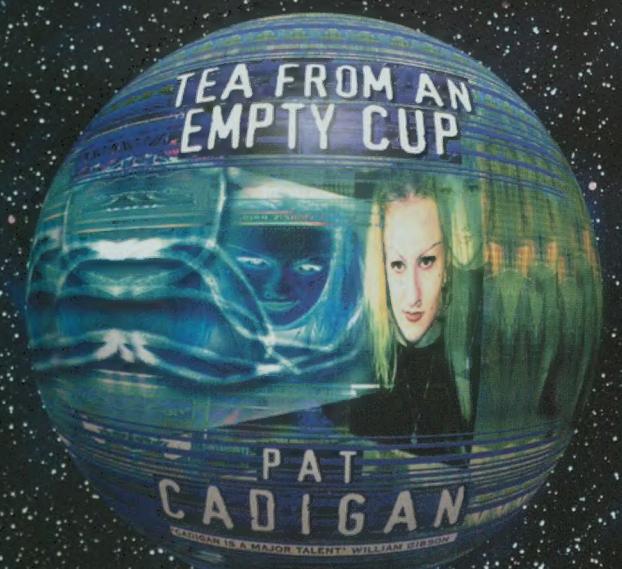
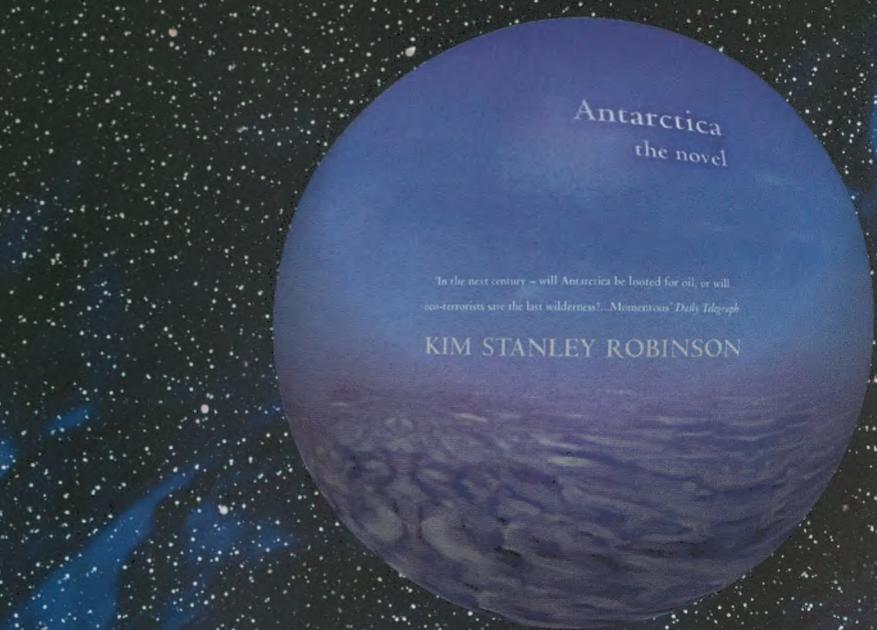
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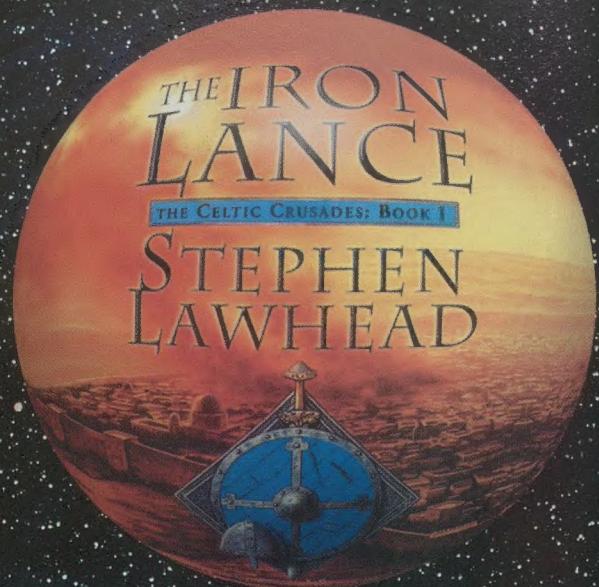


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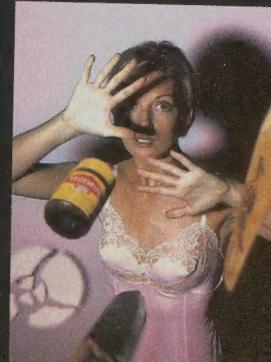
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## EDITORIAL NOVEMBER 1998 No 116



### PANTS ON FIRE

In a case that will be decided in an east London court at the end of November, Steve Grayson, a former staff photographer at the *News of the World*, is claiming unfair dismissal after his photos of the 'Beast of Bodmin' were identified as a puma in a Dartmoor wildlife park - see **FT111:14**. Grayson claims he was pressured by his bosses to produce evidence for the creature and that there was, generally, "a culture of fabrication" at the paper. Both charges were dismissed as "completely untrue" by a number of past and present editors (*UK Press Gazette*, 28 Aug, 4 Sept 1998).

The old Latin warning *caveat lector* (reader beware!) these days applies, as never before, to all media channels. The extent of lying in public is truly phenomenal, from the false confessions of fake nuns that fed anti-Catholic hysteria in 19th-century America (see **FT87**) and the brazen press conferences of murderers appealing for witnesses, to the evasions of Bill Clinton and the revelation that some acclaimed historical documentaries passed off unrelated film as eye-witness coverage (*Sunday Times*, 20 Sept 1998).

What is new is the extent to which experienced journalists use their professional authority and that of their newspaper or TV network to slip fabricated stories into circulation. A shocking recent example - which *Vanity Fair* (Sept 1998) calls "the most sustained fraud in modern journalism" - was the discovery that large parts of 27 articles written by Stephen Glass, an associate editor of *The New Republic*, were fabrications. Glass - just 25 and already a favoured reporter for *Rolling Stone*, *Harpers*, *Policy Review* and others - had invented quotes, people and companies and even created a fake website to refer to.

We ourselves were taken in by the 'Operation Tailwind' story - see **FT113** editorial - in which the joint clout of CNN and *Time Magazine* was given to a claim that it was official policy to use Sarin nerve gas on US defectors during the Vietnam war. Within

weeks Ted Turner, who owns CNN, offered an abject public apology for the untrue story, sacked reporters and senior staff involved and accepted the resignations of others.

In our field, the press has enjoyed reporting the bizarre and shocking confessions of people who claim to have survived a 'satanic cult', 'alien abduction' or a 'government mind-control experiment' without giving any thought to such matters as proof, the mental health of the informant, their motives or the increasingly dubious 'recovered memory' therapies that seem to figure in many of them - see page 16.

Forteans will always be aware that some of these stories *might* be true, but our ability to detect them is not made easier when journalists themselves blur the lines. At risk here is public trust in the veracity of the press, something that is eroded every time a story is printed as fact one day and retracted or corrected the next.

The fear is that a 'culture of fabrication' extends much deeper into modern journalism than the standard complaint of being misquoted implies. Journalists should be accountable for fiction they claim to be fact, writes US journalist Steven Brill in the editorial of his new watchdog magazine, *Brill's Content*. Brave words, but distinguishing between mistakes and lies, pious frauds and devious hoaxes is often more a matter of intention than 'truth' - and establishing motive is notoriously difficult.

**P**aul Parson's 'Weird Science' column last issue mentioned the coming Leonid meteor shower but we forgot to add the date for the best viewing - Tuesday 17 November 1998, from 19:45 UT into the wee hours of Wednesday. "There is a strong possibility of a spectacular shower and possibly a true meteor storm, with predicted rates up to 10,000 meteors per hour," says our astronomy correspondent Peter Grego.

We ourselves were taken in by the 'Operation Tailwind' story - see **FT113** editorial - in which the joint clout of CNN and *Time Magazine* was given to a claim that it was official policy to use Sarin nerve gas on US defectors during the Vietnam war. Within

*Paul Sieveking*

### FEATURE WRITERS THIS ISSUE



#### ROB IRVING

Rob Irving was recently described by ET/creationist Michael Hesemann as "the only living evidence of Darwin's theory". Find out what he has to say about Gorilla and his fellow time travellers on page 26.



#### TONY HEALY AND PAUL CROPPER

Australian writer Paul Cropper has researched animal mysteries since 1976 when, aged 14, he became fascinated by the Emmaville panther phenomenon. His fellow Australian Tony Healy has been involved with forteana since 1969 when, aged 24, he became obsessed by the Sasquatch mystery while working in the forests of British Columbia. They met

in 1981 hunting for the Kangaroo Valley panther, since when, between them, they have travelled to Fiji, North America, Scotland, Iceland, Ireland, Nepal and Malaysia in search of fortean creatures for their 1994 book *Out of the Shadows*.

**ANDREW DENNIS**  
Andrew is 26 years old and lives in London with his wife and two kids. He works as a solicitor for the firm of Barlow Lyde and Gilbert, specialising in civil engineering disputes, and has taken an active role in the process of establishing the Charles Fort Institute. He is also a stalwart of the 'Forteana' email list and was once accused of "conspiring to bring about the death of 20th-century thought". Asked if he had anything to say for himself, he replied: "I look far less deranged in real life".

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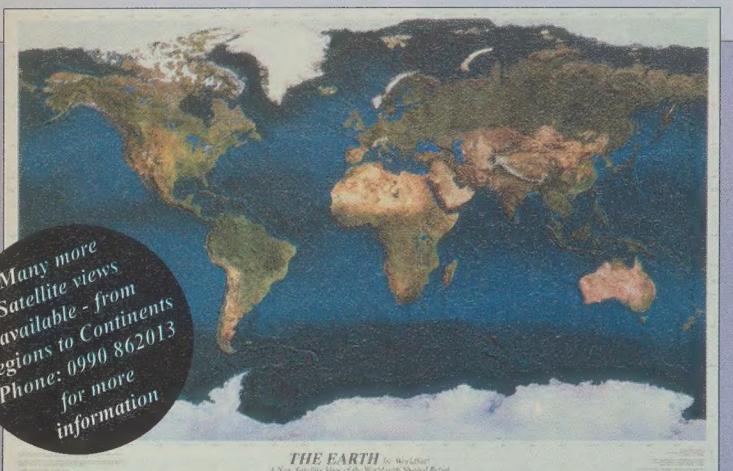
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## STRANGE DAYS

### sidelines

# a splitting headache



**HEAD CASE:** The surgery caused more damage (top) than the nail's entry (below).



**MYNAH OFFENCES:** Friedrich Baier, 46, a sex pest from Cologne, harassed many women on the phone while posing as a doctor. The law caught up with him when his pet mynah bird screeched out his owner's name and the woman on the line told the police. "During the call I could hear this cheeping and squarking in the background and then I clearly heard a man's name," she said. *Express*, 25 July 1998.

**ROBOTIC HARM:** Pamela Bachman from Martinez, California, is suing her former employer, Pacific Bell, for medical bills and loss of wages after Zippy the office mail-delivering robot squashed her against a filing cabinet last year, injuring her shoulder, back, feet, hand and right big toe. Pacific Bell said the robots had been in service for 13 years and had clean safety records. [AP] 8 Aug 1998.

**BOMB SIGHTS:** Frank Walsh, 65, was hired by Government architects to clear World War II bombs from one of Britain's biggest millennium projects. Armed with an amethyst and a piece of wire, the retired teacher walked round the site of the £127 million Lowry Centre in Salford, Manchester. "There were two bombs and I told them where to dig," he said. Disposal company Bactec detected metal objects exactly where he indicated. *Sunday Mirror*, 23 Aug 1998.

**BEAK BOYS:** The RSPB now recognises the thousands of red-necked parakeets (*Psittacula krameri*) patrolling London as British birds and not just visitors. The first naturalised breeding of the bird, a native of India, is thought to have taken place in about 1969. One theory is that the father of the London birds belonged to guitarist Jimi Hendrix. He was given a *krameri* at a gig and soon after it escaped from his flat in Notting Hill. *Eve Standard Magazine (London)*, 7 April 1998.

**THE MOTHER OF ALL:** Leontina Albina (née Espinoza), a Chilean listed in the Guinness Book of Records as the most prolific living mother, died aged 73 on 6 August at her home in San Antonio, Chile, following a diabetic coma. Between 1943 and 1981, she had given birth to 55 (or 57) children, including nine sets of triplets and 11 pairs of twins. Only 40 (24 boys and 16 girls) survived her. The all-time record is held by an 18th century Russian peasant, the wife of Feodor Vassilyev, who had 69 children. [R, AFP] 8 Aug 1998.

**LIVING UP TO YOUR NAME:** American businessman Timothy Tipsy flew home a day late after being barred from an earlier flight because he was drunk. Staff at Gatwick had called police after Mr Tipsy, 42, became abusive. *Times*, 26 Aug 1998.

**SEAL YOU LATER:** A 33lb (15kg) seal from the North Pole was netted a long way from home on 22 May by a fisherman 70 nautical miles off Quang Ngai province on Vietnam's central coast. An expert from the oceanology institute was quickly sent to the area and paid three million dong (about £140) for the seal. *Western Mail*, 26 May 1998.

**TRAVIS BOGUMILL,** 21, an engineering student from Eau Claire, Wisconsin, employed as a construction worker, was shot on 10 July with an industrial nail gun that drove a 3.25in (8.25cm) nail all the way into his skull. He had passed a co-worker descending a ladder with the gun on a building site at Stanley, Wisconsin, and the gun had accidentally fired. He said it "felt like somebody was smacking my head repeatedly with a hammer" for up to 30 seconds afterwards. The nail went in so deep that the only thing visible was a small hole in Bogumill's scalp. An X-ray showed it had lodged in the right side of his brain, halfway between his ear and the top of his head. It was removed in an eight-hour operation and the 7in (18cm) scalp wound was closed with 34 staples.

Bogumill walked out of the hospital on 16 July with doctors shaking their heads. They told him that he shouldn't have been able to walk or talk after the accident and that they were baffled that he wasn't knocked unconscious. He was lucky that the nail didn't hit any blood vessels.

He found his life has changed in odd ways. He had been an avid country music fan, but now he says that if he listens to several instruments playing simultaneously, they all blend into one. "It just sounds goofy. I don't even want to listen to it." He used to like his eggs over easy, but now prefers them sunny-side up.

He is not so good at maths as he used to be. "You could give me two two-digit numbers and I could multiply them within seconds in my head. But now you give me a piece of paper and multiplying 56 by 23 is still difficult," he said. His memory has become selective. For instance, he and his girlfriend attended a volleyball game for a team on which he used to play. He asked her about all the new members of the team. "She gave me this strange look and said, 'These are all the same people who were here before,'" he said.

The name Travis Bogumill reminds *FT* of the famous Arizona lumberjack and alien abductee Travis Walton; and the 10th century Bulgarian heretical sect, the Bogomils, probably named after the Slavic Bog, meaning 'God'. He takes his place in the gallery of memorably-named victims, along with Fortman Murff, the Mississippi lumberjack who accidentally almost decapitated himself with a chainsaw and lived to tell the tale [FT43:1]. [AP] 17 July+3 Aug 1998.

## THIS JUST IN

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### HOSTWATCH RERUN

A rare chance to see BBC TV's controversial *Ghostwatch* takes place at Chapter Arts Centre, Market Road, Canton, Cardiff on Hallowe'en (31 October).

This is the first time Hallowe'en has fallen on a Saturday since the infamous original transmission on Hallowe'en 1992. Starring Michael Parkinson and Sarah Green, it is a dramatisation of a live broadcast from a poltergeist-haunted house that goes horribly wrong. The BBC was severely criticised for frightening swaths of the public witness - see our coverage in *FT67*.

The new screening is accompanied by a showing of the Jonathan Miller Sixties' adaptation of M R James'

Others who saw the footage were less impressed, saying

classic ghost tale *O Whistle and I'll Come To You*.

Further venue info from David Prothero (Chapter) (Tel: 01222 396061).

### NESSIE HOPES SEALED

New video footage taped on 5 September at Loch Ness has been raising heckles in the cryptozoological community. The controversial 10 seconds show what appears to be the head or hump of a creature moving very slowly through the water, then submerging quickly.

Craig Mitcheson from Newcastle-upon-Tyne, who shot the sequence from a boat called *Nessie Hunter*, told reporters "I have never seen anything like it."

Others who saw the footage were less impressed, saying

that it's clearly a visiting seal. We'll have more on this next issue. *The Scotsman*, 10 Sept 1998.

### MOO BABY

After getting himself in the mood with a pornographic video, a man entered a field carrying sex toys and a camera, then made love to two cows. He returned for more a few weeks later.

The 50-year-old from Alingsas, west Sweden, was arrested after his action pictures were discovered by photo-developers. Police charged him with cruelty to animals. Looking at the photographs, a local vet determined that the cows had been damaged both physically and psychologically. [RJ], 13 Sept 1998.

## sidelines

**DOWN ON THE SWARM:** Officials and farmers in north-west China used 100,000 chickens (and thousands of starlings) last year to control the worst locust infestation in a decade. The counties round Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang province, plan to raise 200,000 chickens next year for the task. For 60 days, they are trained to hunt locusts in the grasslands at the sound of a whistle. Chickens fattened on protein-rich locusts fetch a good price. [RJ] 25 Aug; [AP] 2 Sept 1998.

**SOMETHING BORROWED:** A bride-to-be was treated for "severe shock" in hospital in Iraklion, Crete, after finding the her fiancé wearing her wedding dress and in a passionate embrace with his best man. She made the discovery after a pre-nuptial party on 7 August when she took her friends on an unscheduled visit to the couple's new home to look at the gown. The wedding was called off and the groom went into hiding. [R, AFP] *Guardian*, 14 Aug 1998.

**BUMPING INTO FRIENDS:** A woman treated by a passing doctor after a car crash in 1993 met her again after the doctor crashed through her house. Judy Thompson, of Solihull, returned the favour, giving Stella Isaac first aid and calling an ambulance. *Times*, 18 Mar 1998.

**WASTE NOT, WANT NOT:** Among the objects found recently in British sewers were a dead python, a deceased boa constrictor, a lawnmower, a stuffed gorilla and a functioning Yamaha organ. *Irish Times*, 17 July 1998.

**BORN FREE:** Luigi Nappello was born on the pavement outside his home in Naples on 24 August as his parents, Concetta Romano and Antonio Nappello, scrambled to the car for the trip to hospital - but they didn't notice! The oversight was only discovered when doctors got Concetta into the operating room and found nothing to deliver. Her husband sped back home and found his son waiting for him on the pavement. Mother and son were in hospital two days later in good condition. [AP] 26 Aug 1998.

**PRIVATE ON PARADE:** Darryl Andrew Hanel, 36, of Albury near Brisbane, Australia, attacked General John Baker, the outgoing chief of the Defence Force, at his retirement parade. He told police it was revenge for being given a drug by army officers which suppressed his sexual appetite and shrivelled his genitals. *Brisbane Sun-Herald*, 5 July 1998.

**GNOme SICK:** Eleven garden gnomes were found hanged from a bridge in the small village of Brie in northeastern France in what appeared to be a mass suicide. Police found a suicide note in which the gnomes said they wanted to "quit this world" and join a "sect of the temple of submissive dwarves". An offshoot of the defunct Garden Gnome Liberation Front was suspected. *Sunday Times*, 30 Aug; *Guardian*, 3 Sept 1998.

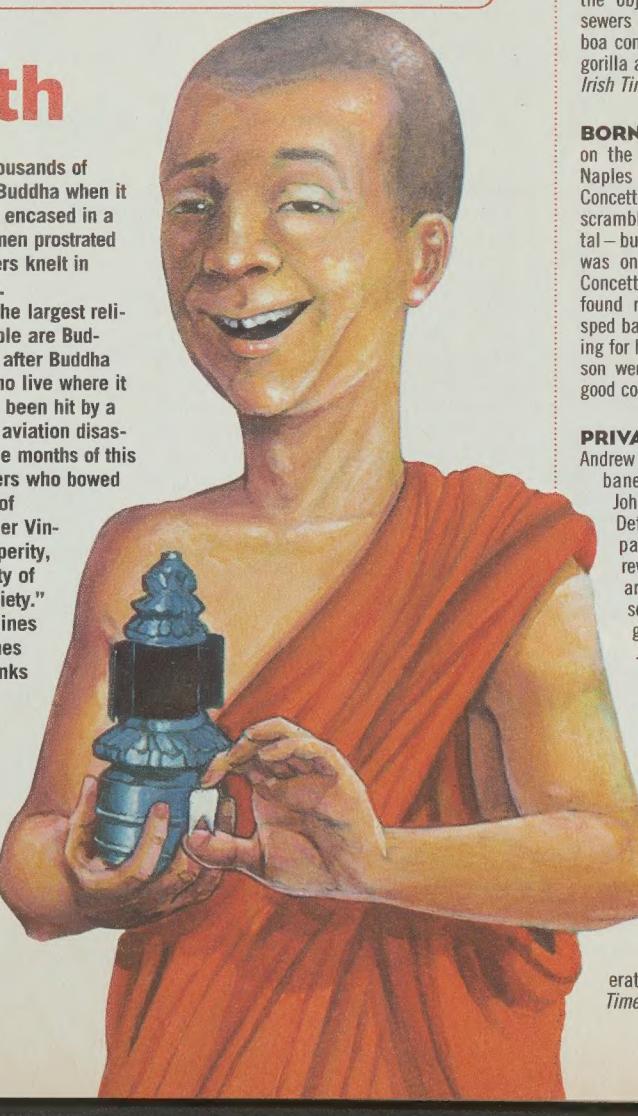
## telling the tooth

**SINGING HYMNS AND** praying for peace and good fortune, thousands of Buddhists greeted a holy tooth believed to have belonged to Buddha when it arrived in Taiwan. Monks in saffron robes escorted the tooth, encased in a miniature golden pagoda, off a flight from India. Dozens of women prostrated themselves and spread their long hair over a red carpet. Others knelt in rows, clasping their hands in front to express their reverence.

The ceremony at Taipei's international airport was one of the largest religious events in Taiwan. A quarter of Taiwan's 21 million people are Buddhists. Buddhists say the tooth, one of three reportedly found after Buddha was cremated 2,400 years ago, brings blessings for those who live where it is housed and keeps them from disaster. Taiwan has recently been hit by a string of high-profile violent crimes, corruption scandals and aviation disasters, which have killed more than 200 people in the first three months of this year. At the airport ceremony, politicians were among followers who bowed three times before an altar where the tooth sat amid a cloud of incense smoke. "We pray for your merciful blessings," Premier Vincent Siew said in a prayer to Buddha. "Give our country prosperity, let us have propitious winds and rains, bring the people plenty of food and clothes and let us have peace and harmony in our society."

Several monks paraded the tooth in front of four China Airlines planes after the ceremony and sprayed holy water at the planes in an attempt to confer safety on the flagship carrier. The monks later escorted the tooth to the spot near the airport where a China Airlines plane crashed in February, killing 202 people. They prayed for the victims' souls.

The tooth has added a strange twist to the old rivalry between Taiwan and China. Buddhist monks in India who gave the relic to Taiwan say they got it from a temple in Tibet in 1968 when China was in the throes of the Cultural Revolution. Master Hsin Yun, whose Fu Kuang Temple will house the tooth, said China tried to stop the tooth from coming to Taiwan. On 8 April, China's official Xinhua News Agency quoted a Buddhist official as questioning the authenticity of the tooth. The official said only two of Buddha's teeth had been found - one was in Beijing, the other in Sri Lanka. [AP] 9 April 1998.





## STRANGE DAYS

### sidelines

**CARTOON CONSPIRACIES:** A new animated series entitled *Roswell Conspiracies - Aliens, Myths & Legends* is planned by Bobbot Kids Network in Hollywood, to be syndicated in the autumn of 1999. Aimed at six- to 13-year-olds, the show will revolve around the idea that leading nations have formed a secret alliance to destroy alien invaders. It will suggest that many of this planet's oldest myths and legends were the result of alien encounters. *Variety*, 13 May 1998.

**EASY PC:** John Stevens, 32, a computer programmer from Philadelphia, says his computer showed signs of a virus a week before he got sick - and is convinced he has caught the virus from his machine. His doctor, Dr Mark Fordland, agrees. "He has become forgetful, like something is eating up his memory, his data. He has less and less energy. Even an EEG of his brain waves keeps changing. The virus could eat him up until his mind is a blank and he's like a vegetable." *Computer Weekly*, 26 Mar 1998.

**PET PYROMANIACS:** A hamster called Butch escaped from its cage in a Scunthorpe house, gnawed through a cable that caused the television to explode, which in turn set the living room on fire.

Five days later, a house fire in Newcastle-under-Lyme was blamed on a hamster trundling its treadmill so fast that the friction caused sparks which set fire to bedding in its cage. The explanation was accepted by loss adjusters. Steve Lewis, a chef, found the cage, lounge curtains and carpets ablaze. He rescued his pet, which escaped with singed ears and whiskers. *Scunthorpe Evening Telegraph*, 25 June; *Times*, 30 June 1998.

**BACKBREAKING EFFORT:** Jonathan Etherington-Baker, 35, who spent five weeks bicycling 4,200 miles (6,759km) on a round-Britain trip, fell from his bike and broke his back just 10 miles (16km) from home. As he tried to cross a cattle grid in the village of Exbury in Hampshire's New Forest, he lost his footing, fell and was run over by a tractor. *Western Mail*, 4 June 1998.

**LOSING HIS MIND:** An unidentified man in his late 20s walked into a police station in Ohio with a 9in (23cm) wire protruding from his forehead and asked officers to give him an X-ray to help him find his brain. The man had drilled a 15cm-deep hole in his skull with a power drill and had stuck the wire in to try and find the brain. *Salt Lake (UT) Tribune*, 18 June 1998.

**IT RUNS IN THE FAMILY:** Police in South River, New Jersey, visited the apartment of Boris Angelevski after neighbours reported a disturbance on 1 July. Mr Angelevski stood behind his wife, Maria, with a sledgehammer and threatened them, while their adult son, Sasha, pointed a knife at himself. They then barricaded themselves inside the apartment, which was lined with aluminium foil to keep out moonbeams and planet rays. After about 11 hours, they voluntarily came out and were taken to hospital for psychiatric evaluation. *Las Vegas (NV) Review-Journal*, 2 July 1998.

### in the pink



GUERNSEY EVENING PRESS

**THIS REMARKABLE PINK** herring gull landed on a wall in St Martin's, Guernsey, and was taken to a local animal shelter on 13 July. A good hosing didn't remove the colour. "There is nothing wrong with it," said Jayne Le Cras, the shelter manager. The only possible reason for this that I can think of is that it

has been immersed in something or has eaten something over a long period of time." It was suggested that it might have been dyed to study its migration patterns; but shelter nurse Chrissie Guerin said that such freak coloration would provoke other birds to divebomb it. Furthermore, it would have been

ringed for identification. It was hoped that the bird would be returned to the wild, but it died on the third day of captivity. A post mortem examination was inconclusive with no sign that the bird had digested anything pink and the kidneys and liver were normal. *Guernsey Eve, Press*, 15+16+17+20 July 1998.

### magic and the loan arranger

**IN MIAMI, FOUTANGA** Dit Babani Sissoko (below), 53, was a generous philanthropist affectionately known as 'Baba'. Last year, he gave the Miami Central High School marching band \$300,000 to travel to the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York and buy new uniforms and instruments. Before last Christmas, he wrote out a cheque for \$1.2 million for a homeless centre. When homeless men tried to change \$100 bills, they said the money had been given to them by a well-dressed African. During his 18 months in the city, he is thought to have spent \$40 million on waterfront real estate, jewellery and fleets of luxury cars.

Now, the charismatic Gambian is wanted by the Florida authorities and is being sued by the Dubai Islamic Bank, which

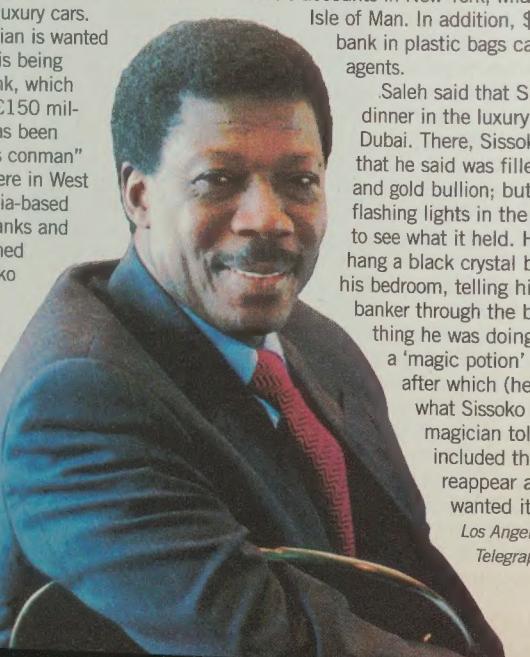
had given him \$240 million (£150 million). Only about \$2 million has been recovered and the "world-class conman" is thought to be back somewhere in West Africa, where he owns a Gambia-based airline and operates hotels, banks and gold mines. When he approached the Dubai Islamic Bank, Sissoko

had offered no collateral and signed no loan agreements or documents, not even an informal IOU. The manager and chief accountant claimed he used black magic; they are both in jail awaiting trial.

Born in a poor village in western Mali, Sissoko never attended school

and is functionally illiterate. A devout Muslim, he prays several times a day in his native language, Bambara. He speaks no English and poor French. He presented himself to the Dubai Islamic Bank as a Gambian businessman needing loans to finance "promising business ventures" in his homeland. He variously claimed to have made his fortune from oil, diamonds, timber and textiles. Between August 1995 and January 1998, the bank's manager in its Dubai HQ, Mohammed Ayoub Saleh, authorised 183 separate telex transfers to Sissoko's accounts in New York, Miami, Geneva and the Isle of Man. In addition, \$80 million left the bank in plastic bags carried by Sissoko or his agents.

Saleh said that Sissoko invited him to dinner in the luxury villa he was renting in Dubai. There, Sissoko showed him a room that he said was filled with boxes of cash and gold bullion; but there were so many flashing lights in the room that it was hard to see what it held. He permitted Sissoko to hang a black crystal ball from the ceiling of his bedroom, telling him he could watch the banker through the ball and know everything he was doing. Sissoko also rubbed a 'magic potion' into the banker's arm, after which (he claims) he always did what Sissoko told him. The Gambian magician told him that his powers included the ability to make money reappear at the bank whenever it wanted it back. *Observer*, 2 Aug; *Los Angeles Times*, 17 Aug; *Sunday Telegraph*, 23 Aug 1998.



### glow for a walk

**THIS MOTHER AND child statue** was erected in St Lawrence's churchyard, Darlaston, West Midlands, in 1958. It is said to give off a fluorescent glow at night, while some claim to have seen the young boy figure leave his mother and walk around the churchyard. Some residents have been much disturbed by what they have seen, and find the statue creepy. One woman who saw it glowing won't go anywhere near it. Nick Duffy of the West Midlands Ghost Club said: "One story is that 12 hours after the statue was unveiled, three people driving past in a car witnessed an apparition of a monk in the yard. He was walking towards them dressed in white." *Wolverhampton & Darlaston News*, 24 April 1998.

PHOTO: MIDLANDS PRESS



## sidelines

**STONE LOVE:** A couple making love in Manchester's Southern Cemetery were injured when a gravestone fell on top of them. The 25-year-old woman scrambled free and ran for help. When firemen arrived, they found her 27-year-old partner, wearing a skirt and white silk stockings, trapped under the gravestone. It took five firemen to lift the tombstone and the man was treated in hospital for head injuries. *Mirror, D. Telegraph, 24 Aug 1998.*

**DRIVEN TO DISTRACTION:** A car stolen in Lewes, Sussex, was eventually returned to its owner with a full tank of petrol, a new battery, the ignition and stereo speakers repaired, and a selection of new cassettes. *Guardian, 10 June 1998.*

**SHOCK ENDING:** A horse was killed by lightning when two tornadoes swept across Suffolk in mid-June. Scrumpy Jack, a 12-year-old gelding, died in a paddock in Hollesley. The following month, eight elephants found dead inside the Xishuangbanna nature reserve in the Chinese province of Yunnan were believed to have been killed by lightning. *Times, 17 June; Halifax Eve. Courier, 28 July; Sunday Telegraph, 2 Aug 1998.*

**SHAGGY MAN STORY:** A man out for a drive with his family claimed to have seen a yeti in Derbyshire's Peak District. "He was covered in long brown hair – shaggy but not dirty," he told investigator Martin Jeffrey. "We didn't think he was a danger – just a creature left behind by evolution." The yeti fled when another motorist sounded his horn. *Sunday Mirror, 12 July 1998.*

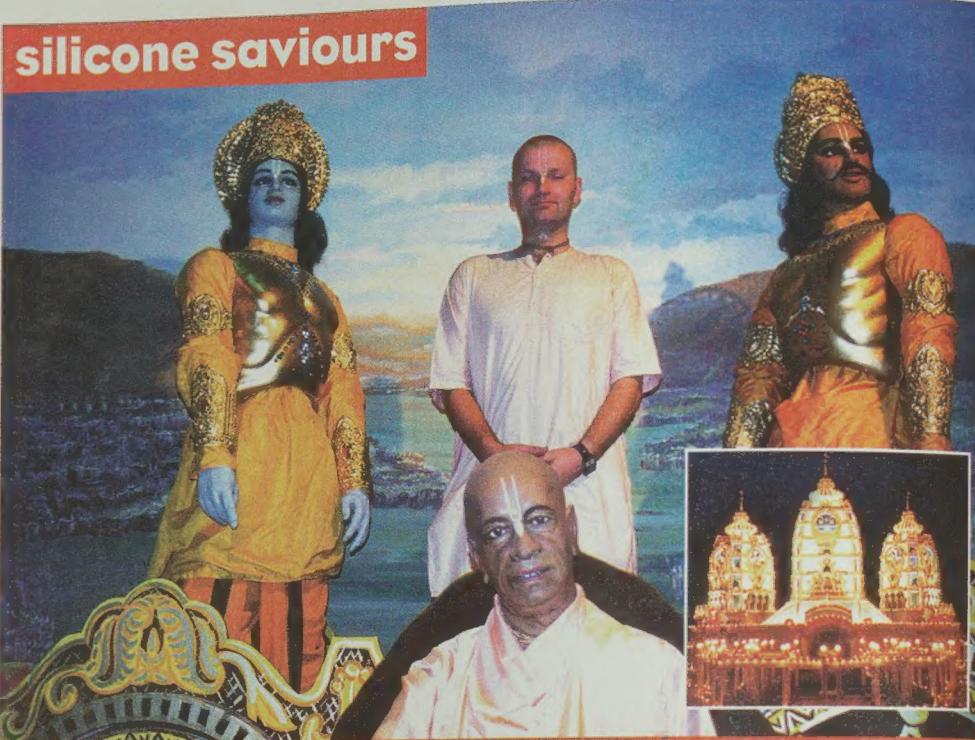
**DOING HARD TIME:** From the *Radio Times* some time in July 1998: "10:00, 'Prison Life', Hard Times. Examining penile reform."

**SAY WHAT?** Jerry Lieber (of Lieber and Stoller) says his interest in lyrics started in school when he used to sing "Happy the Cross-Eyed Bear" his mis-hearing of "Gladly the Cross I'd Bear". When the Beatles sang of "the girl with kaleidoscope eyes", some medically-minded listeners heard it as "the girl with colitis goes by". *Wall Street Journal, 24 Feb 1993.*

**NUMBER CRUNCHER:** A pensioner told to take down the numbers of cars in her street which she suspected of belonging to drug dealers stunned police by giving them the actual registration plates. "After she had pulled off two number plates," said a policeman, "she got a little worried about what she had done." He said she would not be charged with theft. *D. Record, 13 Aug 1998.*

**FELINE LUCKY:** A cat was reunited with his owners after he was sucked into the sky by a tornado and dumped four miles (6.4km) away. Paul and Chris Staten searched for Sam in the debris of their home in Greenfield, Indiana, on 11 June. Nine weeks later, after they had given him up for dead, they got a call from a shopkeeper who had nursed him through severe injuries. He had traced them through a name-tag on Sam's collar. *Independent, 25 Aug; Express, 29 Aug 1998.*

## silicone saviours



**AT A COST** of six million dollars over five years, the Hare Krishna movement – founded in New York 30 odd years ago – has built the Glory of India Temple in New Delhi. Along with idols of Krishna, the temple houses "the Bhagavad Gita Experience", an animatronics show with robots depicting Krishna and Arjuna, which move their heads and limbs and recite from Hindu

scriptures. Hollywood and Indian actors provide the voices. Altogether, nine "mechanical gods", costing around \$4,000 each, have been built by Attraction Services of Los Angeles, the special effects company that created rides at Disneyland. Still under construction at the temple is a "Journey through the Vedic Cosmos", which will have seats that move and shake

along the screen to give a sensation of space travel. More than three decades after their movement was founded in New York, the Hare Krishnas have come full circle – from exporting Indian spirituality to the West to using modern Western technology to promote ancient Indian ideas. *IBBC, 5 April; Financial Times, 25 April; Church Times, 1 May 1998.*

## real man in the iron mask

**IN 1907, THE** American millionaire banker John Pierpont Morgan was in a London club discussing with Lord Lansdale whether it was possible to walk around the globe.

Morgan offered \$100,000 (about £21,000) to anyone who would walk around the world pushing a pram and wearing an iron mask. To win the prize, the contestant had to set off with only £1 and a change of underwear, raise funds only by selling postcards of himself, and pick up a wife along the way without revealing his face.

Harry Bensley (pictured right in his helmet), 18, from Thetford in Norfolk, took up the challenge. He set off from Trafalgar Square on New Year's Day 1908, but was arrested in Kent for selling postcards without a hawker's licence. He was fined half a crown in

Bexleyheath court, but was allowed to keep his mask on. The made-to-measure helmet weighed 70oz (178 grams). He travelled 30,000 miles (48,280km) in six years, walking in Ireland, Canada, America, China, Japan, India, Persia, Egypt, Turkey and the Balkans. He is said to have received more than 200 marriage proposals, none of which he accepted.

When he reached Genoa in Italy he was on the home stretch, but World War I broke out and Morgan declared that the wager was off. Bensley threw away his iron mask and returned to Britain. Morgan is said to have given him £4,000 compensation, but he maintained that he was so peeved that he gave the money to charity. He joined the army, survived the war and married a Yorkshire-woman. He became a councillor in Wivenhoe, Essex, and died in Brighton in 1970. *Guardian, D. Mail, 29 July 1998.*

## tsars in their eyes

**T**he bones of the last crowned Tsar of Russia, Nicholas II, his wife, three daughters and their servants were laid to rest in a low key ceremony in the Peter and Paul Fortress in St Petersburg on 17 July, the 80th anniversary of their assassination [see **FT112: 40-43**. Plans to have the coffins travel by train through the country were vetoed and the bodies were delivered from Yekaterinburg to St Petersburg by aeroplane.

In a service led by local priest Father Boris Glebov (the ceremony was boycotted by the hierarchy of the Orthodox Church), the coffins were interred in a pyramid shape, with the doctor and three servants on the bottom, the Grand Duchesses in the middle and Nicholas and Alexandra on the top. The family's coffins were lined with gold, while the servants were lined with silver.

A 19-gun salute rang out, two volleys short of the 21 allowed for a reigning monarch, as Nicholas had abdicated in favour of his brother, Grand Duke Michael. Michael renounced the title after just 24 hours – their abdications were announced together – and was also murdered in July 1918 in Perm. Orthodox purists have voiced concern over the fact that the Tsar's valet, Aloisius Trupp, was a Roman Catholic – his coffin bore a Western cross

while the others bore the traditional double Orthodox cross.

President Yeltsin made the most of the event despite his original announcement that he would not attend. "In the face of the historic memory of the people we are all responsible. This is why today I could not fail to come. We must close this century which, for Russia, has been a bloody century, by repentance. We must do this in the name of future generations." However, he forbore to mention the names of the victims in deference to the Church's refusal to accept the bones as genuine.

The Orthodox Patriarch led a rival memorial service in Moscow which was attended by the Church hierarchy and a junior branch of the Romanov clan who claim the throne. The Church's decision not to support the burial was a political one and an attempt at rapprochement with the exiled Orthodox Church Abroad. They claim to have some relics of the Tsar – some skin, blood and congealed fat as well as personal items belonging to the family spirited out of the country by Nicholas Sokolov in 1919 – buried in the wall of a church in Brussels and there cannot be two rival sets of relics. The controversy surrounding the identification of the remains will be stirred up again in a few years as the Orthodox Church currently plans to canonise the

decapitated in a "Jewish ritual".

Ironically, the rise of this faction has coincided with the exposure of collaboration between Russian Orthodox leaders and the Communist regime. KGB files contain scores of priests and include such senior church members as Metropolitan Yuvenali of Krutitsy, former head of the Church's external relations, and Metropolitan Pitrim of Volokhalsk, the former head of the Church's publishing section. Significantly, the Church has yet to denounce its declaration of support, made in 1927, to the Communists.

It is hoped that the search for the remaining two children will allow the whole family to be reunited. While they remain unaccounted for, the steady stream of claimants continues. There have recently been claims from several of the "Alexeis" that tissue had been submitted for DNA comparison but that testing had been blocked. The Russian expert who aided in the DNA analysis of the bodies, Dr Pavel Ivanov, also seems to have gone missing. Claimants began to appear even before the death of the family – the children were entertained by a newspaper report of a Tatiana claimant while held captive. **JANE WATKINS** *(AFP) 17-26 June, 14 July; Independent on Sunday, 28 June; Scotland on Sunday 5-12 July; S. Telegraph, 12 July; D. Telegraph, 15-17+18 July; The Guardian, 17 July; Los Angeles Times, 18 July; People, 3 Aug 1998.*

## WIRED FOR WEIRD

**DAVE 'PEIST' WALSH** takes a well-earned break from Nordic beast searches and UFO cult annoyance to deliver you this month's crunchy online harvest muesli.

### TREPAN.COM

You need this site like a hole in the head. Run by the International Trepanation Advocacy Group it tells you everything you never needed to know about skull perforation. Not to be tried at home, with or without power tools. <http://www.trepan.com/>

### THE LEY HUNTER

The Journal of Geomancy and Earth Mysteries, mentioned often in enough in *FT* has hoisted itself online, keeping readers on the "old straight track" with the latest news on ancient site related controversies and discoveries. <http://www.leyhunter.com>

### E.L.F. INFESTED SPACES

The Journal of Possible Paradigms – Austin, Texas-based multidisciplinary investigations into all aspects of UFO related topics. Includes "The Visible College" (Earth's First UFO University), as well as articles on Philip K Dick, alien pancakes, mind control and mystery airships. They can almost be forgiven for using the word "paradigm". <http://www.sdgweb.com/~elfin/>

### INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR NEAR-DEATH STUDIES

A site dealing with the phenomenon of Near-Death Experience – does it prove life after death, that human consciousness breaks free of the mortal body? Don't try this at home either. <http://www.lands.org/>

### SETI@HOME

Invite extraterrestrials to your own doorstep (well, not really) by participating in a "grand experiment that will harness the spare power of hundreds of thousands of Internet-connected computers in the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence". Begins in late 1998, so don't miss out. And yes, you can try this at home. <http://setiathome.ssl.berkeley.edu/>

**DAVE 'DAEV' WALSH** ([daev@hellshaw.com](mailto:daev@hellshaw.com)) resides in Arbour Hill, Dublin and authors a weekly fortean internet epistle, Blather (<http://www.nua.ie/blather>). No extra-terrestrials were harmed in the creation of this column.



## STRANGE DAYS

# FORTEAN FOLLOW-UPS

In which we return to some of the tales reported in the pages of **FORTEAN TIMES** to find out what happened next. This month, we revisit men found in the strangest of places and get stoned.

### IN DANK MEMORY [FT105:14]



On Saturday, 29 August, former barman Geoffrey Smith, 37, left his wife and three children to be buried 6ft (1.8m) under the garden of the Railway Inn in Mansfield, Nottingham, as a tribute to his mother, Emma, who once held the world record for being buried alive.

She spent 101 days underground at a Skegness funfair in 1968, a record that stood until 1981, when an American endured 141 days. Guinness no longer recognises the stunt on safety grounds, but Mr Smith is undaunted.

Emma Smith, a miner's wife, committed suicide in 1996 after a wild 72-year life, particularly for a former nun. Although she declined an offer to live in a glass coffin in a shark-filled pool, she made regular headlines by stunts such as offering sex to striking car workers whose wives had adopted Lysistrata tactics to get them back to work.

Mr Smith's 7x3x3ft (2x0.1x0.1m) wooden

box has a TV capable of receiving all satellite and terrestrial channels, an intercom to the pub, a feeding tube through which books can also be lowered, a breathing tube and a lavatory hatch leading to a temporary septic tank. He plans to be dug up at the end of February, after 180 days underground. *Sunday Express*, 23 Aug; *Guardian*, *Times*, 26 Aug; *D. Telegraph*, 30 Aug 1998.

### STONED AT GOTMAAR [FT54:4]



Every year for the last three centuries, on the day of the new moon in the month of Sharawan, the people of Pandhurna, near Chhindwara in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, celebrate the Gotmaar ("stone-hitting") Festival.

The population divides into two teams and hurl stones and abuse at each other across the river Jam, as they attempt to capture a "lucky" tree temporarily "planted" in the middle of the river. At sundown the drums

cease and the two sides come together, shake hands, nurse their wounds, dine together and return to the peaceful monotony of rural Indian life. In the 1989 Gotmaar, four were killed; this year, there were no deaths, but 25 were seriously injured in hospital and almost 800 others hurt.

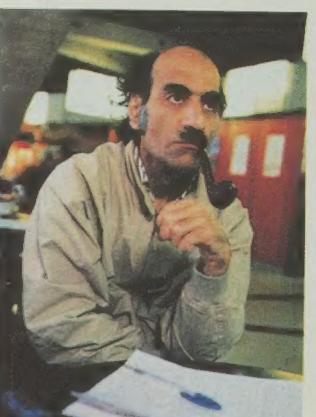
"We all know it is barbaric," said Bhargao Pandurang Bhagwatkar, a local schoolteacher for many years. "It is a kind of madness. And it has no reason at all. But it has been with us since day one and, on that day every year, we just cannot help ourselves."

The traditional story is that sometime in the 17th century, a boy from the Pandhurna side of the river eloped with a girl from the village on the other side, which was then known as Sawargaon but is now part of Pandhurna. As the couple tried to flee across the river, the Sawargaon people began to stone them. Hearing the commotion, the Pandhurnans ran to the riverbank and returned fire. The couple died in the cross-fire. The tree is cut every year on the day before Gotmaar from a special grove of flame trees beside a Siva temple where, allegedly, the couple first met. It is placed in the river on the spot where they are said to have died. *AP* 24 Aug 1998.

### THE FLYING SCOTSMAN [FT56:8]

Merhan Karimi Nasseri (below), calling himself "Alfred Merhan", is still living in Charles de Gaulle airport, where he has been stranded for the last 10 years. He survives on the charity of airport staff and curious travellers and spends the time studying economics, writing his journal (which in 1995 had grown to 6,000 pages), reading discarded newspapers, listening to his radio, and talking to people who drop by. He keeps his books in five Lufthansa transit boxes and sleeps in a sleeping bag on a bench opposite Burger King.

According to Christian Bourguet, who has been Merhan's lawyer since 1989, he was born in 1950 (or 1945?) in the small town of Masjed Soleiman in the north-west of Iran, the son of a doctor working for the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. At the time, this area of Iran was under a British governor, entitling Merhan to British citizenship. After his father's death in 1972, he learned that he was the illegitimate son of a British nurse working for the oil company. His stepmother forced him to renounce his inheritance and leave Iran, but the family paid



for him to go to the University of Bradford, where he read Yugoslavian studies. When the money stopped coming, he returned to Iran, where Savak, the secret police, accused him of taking part in anti-Shah demonstrations, seized his identity papers and threw him in jail for four months. His family then bought him out and got him a special passport for emigration only. From 1976 (or 1977?) he wandered through Europe, asking in vain for asylum. In 1981 he was admitted into Belgium by the High Commission for Refugees in Brussels, and for five years he studied, but had no employment.

Merhan then discovered that his mother was Scottish, lived in Glasgow and was called Simon - or Simone, if it was her first name. He got a ferry ticket to Britain, but en route he made a crazy mistake. He posted his *titre de voyage* (a sort of passport for refugees) and his Belgian permit of residence back to the High Commission in Brussels, thinking he would have no further need of them. Without papers, he was refused entry into Britain and was sent back to Belgium, which was also barred to him. Travelling to France, he was arrested

for illegal immigration and jailed for four months. He flew to Britain, was sent back and jailed for another five months. He then tried to enter Britain a third time, was sent back and jailed for yet another five months. After that, in November 1988, he moved into the Terminal One transit zone in Charles de Gaulle airport, a non-person in a non-place, where he remains.

Bourguet has established that the High Commission in Belgium has Merhan's refugee card, but they refuse to post it, saying that Merhan must pick it up in person. Merhan refuses to go, convinced that he will be refused entry and end up in jail again. The Belgians have even said he can settle in Belgium and they will give him money, but he doesn't believe them. Bourguet has offered to drive him to Belgium and stay with him until everything is sorted out. He would be able to get the necessary papers to visit Britain and perhaps find his mother - but he won't budge from the airport.

"Cast out by his family, then his country, then by most of Europe, [Merhan] managed to build himself a redoubt against the damning sense of his disposability," wrote the journalist David Gale. "The price he seems to have paid is his capacity to remember what freedom is really like." *News of the Weird*, Jan 1991, 10 Aug 1995, 13 Feb 1998; *Sunday Times*, 4 Aug 1991; *D. Telegraph*, 15 Feb 1992; *Wall Street Journal*, 7 Oct 1994; *Washington Post*, 24 Oct 1994; *D. Telegraph Magazine*, 27 June 1998.

ROBERT FRANKENBERG

# meteoric fall to fame



CATCH A FALLEN STAR: Nelda Wallace and the largest of the four rocks thought to be part of asteroid Vesta.

A 37lb (17kg) METEORITE crashed into the back yard of Nelda Wallace in Portales, eastern New Mexico, at around 7.30am on 13 June. She and her brother-in-law heard a series of aerial booms followed by a roaring sound like a freight train or a jet. "It went sheeee-ew and landed," she said. She stood about 130 yards (119m) away as it chiselled out a 10x12in (25x30cm) hole in her caliche clay driveway. Nine other pieces were found in the neighbourhood in the following days.

"This kind of meteorite is very unusual," said Adrian Bearly, a research professor at the University of New Mexico. "It is a mixture of iron, nickel and silicate. The nickel is dissolved in it - like an alloy." It was thought to be about 4.5 billion years old. Of four meteorites recorded as being seen crashing to Earth in New Mexico, this is probably the largest. The next largest was the Pasamonte meteorite of March 1933 and the latest could be from the same asteroid, a 325-mile- (523km)- wide heavenly body known as Vesta.

Also on 13 June, but more than 1,000 miles away, a tennis-ball-sized rock plummeted into a house in Nashville, Tennessee. At about 9am, Houston Woods was sitting in his kitchen with his wife, Dolores, when they heard "a loud explosion". In their bedroom was a charred piece of metal, looking like a lump of coal, lodged in the mattress. It had crashed through the roof of the house at 6116 Nashua Avenue, then broke through the attic floor and bedroom ceiling.

"It has the classic fused crust which a meteorite is supposed to have when it has passed through the atmosphere,"

# EXTRA EXTRA

HEADLINES FROM NEWSPAPERS AROUND THE WORLD

### BANANA ON SODOMY CHARGES

*Guardian*, 4 July 1997

### NAVY TO MAKE BOATS

*South China Morning Post*, 7 July 1997

### LOW-COST RABIES SHOTS TO BE OFFERED IN TRANSYLVANIA

*Ashville (NC) Citizen-Times*, 7 July 1997

### CENTRAL BANK AIMS TO REPLACE THE MATTRESS

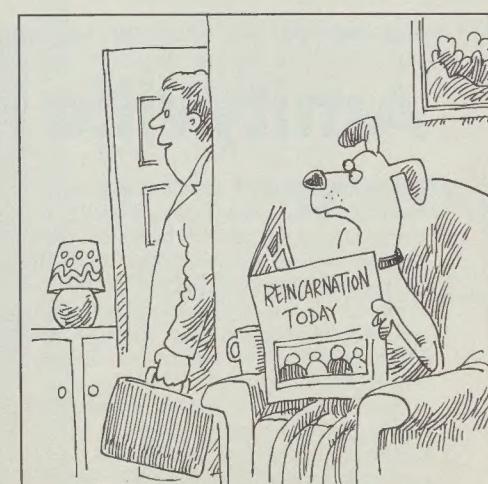
*Guardian*, 9 July 1997

### SWISS HALE HEROIN GIVEAWAY AS A SUCCESS

*Associated Press*, 10 July 1997

### COUNTY OFFICIALS SEEK PUBLIC INPUT ON ADULT STORES

*Huntsville (Texas) Item*, 17 July 1997

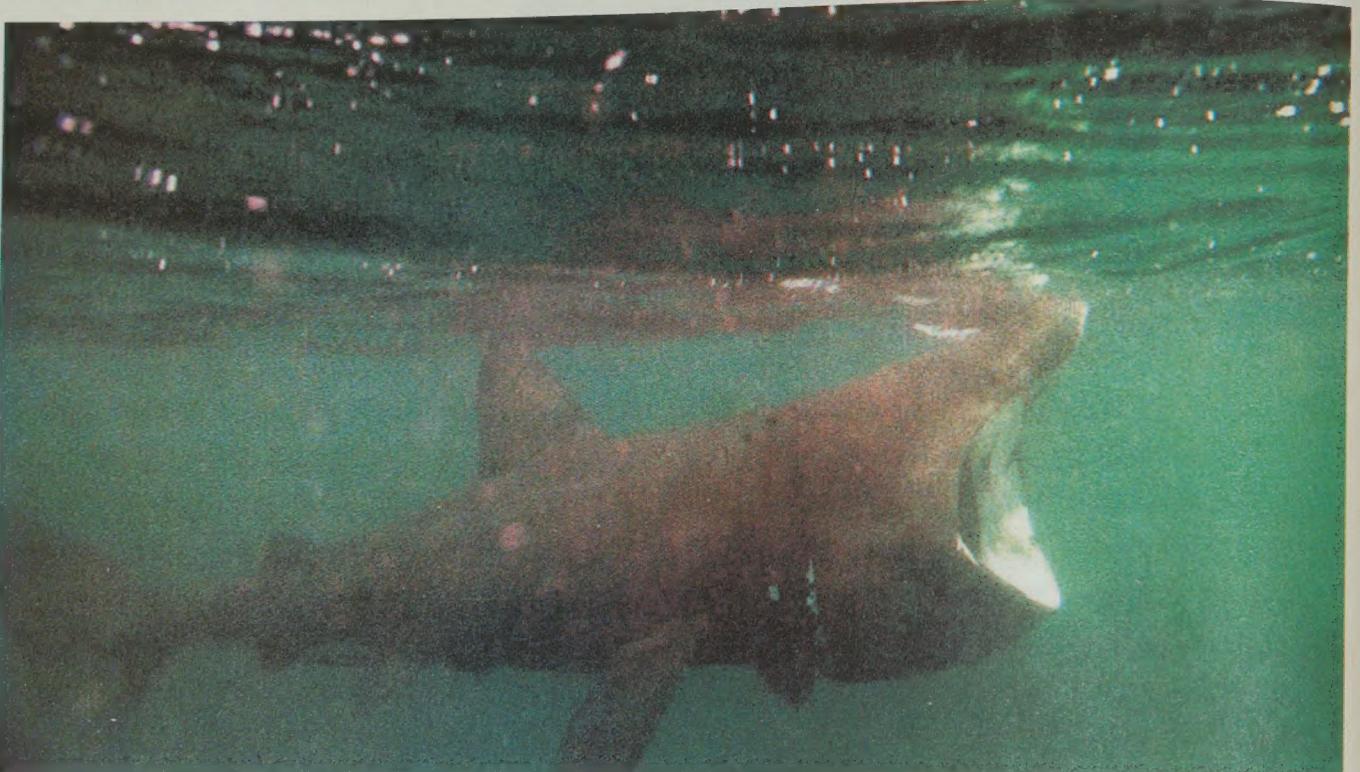


GUERRI



**STRANGE DAYS**

## getting up to some finny business



APEX

SIGHTINGS OF A record 500 basking sharks lying on the surface, fins clearly visible, were reported off England's south coast at Kennack and Coverack on the Lizard Peninsula on 14 May, and described as "a wildlife spectacle unique in Cornwall's history". The gathering of the harmless, plankton-eating sharks, up to 35ft (11m) long, is unprecedented in the British Isles. Perhaps they were taking advantage of the unusually warm weather, or were attracted by a plankton boom; or perhaps they had returned to cock a snook at the fishermen who, since 26 March this year, have been banned by law from capturing or injuring them. The largest previously-recorded sighting off Cornwall was 50 in 1994 and the biggest number seen together anywhere in the world was 250. On the same day,

three black and white killer whales, or orcas – one "very large" male, one female and one youngster – were sighted off Porthgwarras. Growing up to 25ft (7.6m), orcas are the biggest predators on Earth since the extinction of Tyrannosaurus rex. "They even attack whales much bigger than themselves and tear chunks out of them until they die," said Nick Tregenza of the Cornish Wildlife Trust. It seemed likely that the orcas were following the sharks.

In the subsequent few days, the sharks circled in waters off Gwenver and Sennen beaches, feeding off plankton in waves beside surfers and snorklers. Although basking sharks are fairly common in Cornish waters over the summer months, they usually gather in groups of 12 to 15. Almost nothing is

known about the habits and annual migration of the basking shark. Paul Knapman, fisheries liaison officer for English Nature, said: "There is a suspicion that they appear off Spain in early spring, move towards the English Channel, the Irish Sea, to the Scottish coast in July and August, after which no one knows where they go. It's one of the mysteries of the deep."

A month after the first basking shark sightings, a school of Risso's dolphins were spotted off Porthtowan on the north Cornish coast. Risso's dolphins are indigenous but not common and rarely seen. They can grow to 12ft (3.6m) in length and are grey with occasional whitish streaks. *D. Telegraph, Times, 16 May; West Briton, 21 May, 11 June; Western Morning News, 29 May, 13+19 June 1998.*

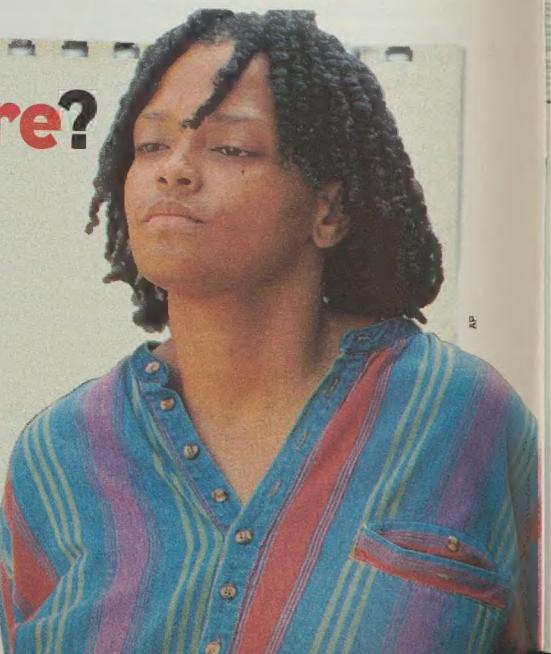
## Amityville Horror encore?

DEBRA ROBERTSON, A 31-year-old crack-head from the village of Amityville in Long Island, was found by police making the sign of the cross over the bodies of her six-year-old daughter Delvin King and five-year-old son Melvin King, who lay dead on a couch. Her infant son slept unharmed in a bedroom. Robertson had scalded the children by immersing them in boiling water. They could have been asphyxiated or drowned, but the cause of death was to be determined by autopsy. She said she had snapped because the apartment

was possessed by demons.

The horror in the white-frame house at 505 Broadway bore eerie echoes of the 1974 slaughter, less than a mile away, of an Amityville family by a 23-year-old son who claimed phantoms ordered him to kill them. The murders became grist for a fictionalised best-seller called *The Amityville Horror – A True Story*, which was later turned into a film. *NY Daily News, 26 June 1998.*

DEMON: Was Debra Robertson driven to kill?



NEW BOOKS FROM

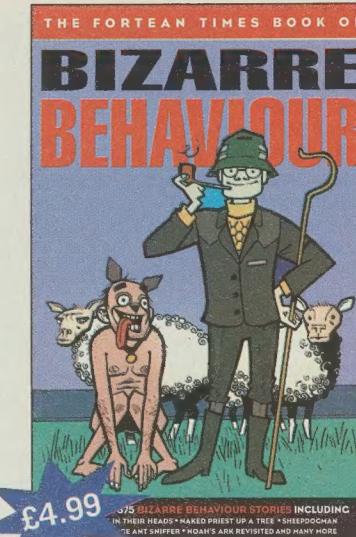
**forteantimes**  
the journal of strange phenomena

### THE FORTEAN TIMES BOOK OF BIZARRE BEHAVIOUR

Compiled by Ian Simmons

Edna Ourbach and Daniel Tevereau's first encounter was less than romantic. Ourbach was eating at a cafe in Majorca when the naked Tevereau crashed onto her table from above. He had woken up in his hotel room overlooking the cafe and had toppled over his balcony while looking for the toilet. Neither person was injured in the surprise encounter. They married three weeks later.

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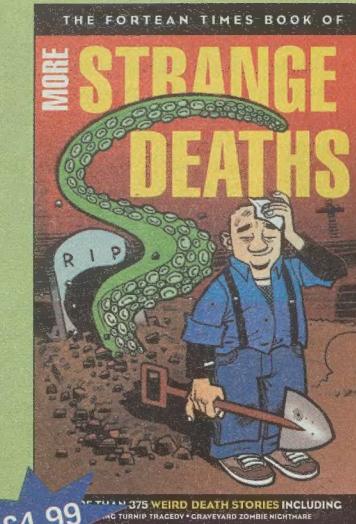
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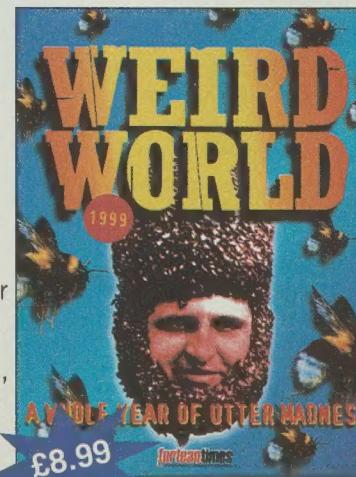
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Edited by Mark Pilkington & Joe McNally

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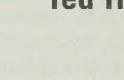
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**BORDERS**



## STRANGE DAYS



## MEDICAL BAG

An American psychiatrist who lead his patient to believe that she was a cannibalistic witch now faces disciplinary proceedings and the loss of his licence. Chicago-based Dr Bennett Braun – an internationally recognised specialist in multiple-personality disorder and repressed memory therapies – is accused of “gross negligence” in his treatment of Patricia Burgus which left her and her family ruined emotionally and financially.

Mrs Burgus had come to him in 1986 seeking relief for depression after the birth of her second son. Over time, Braun convinced her that she possessed 300 personalities, had sexually abused her children, eaten human flesh and served as the high priestess of a network of satanic groups.

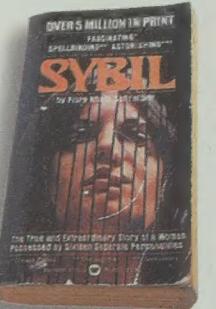
Thomas Glasgow, chief medical prosecutor for the Department of Professional Regulation (DPR) of Illinois, brought the charges after Mrs Burgus reported her case in January. When her family's \$3 million insurance policy was used up, her treatment petered out. Soon, the 42-year-old woman realised that her recovered memories couldn't be true. “There was no way I could come from a little town in Iowa, be eating 2,000 people a year and nobody said anything about it,” she said.

“Braun believes there's a world-wide trans-generational satanic cult [and] had the patient believing she had participated in cannibalism, ritualistic killings and child pornography,” said Glasgow, and that Burgus' children “were genetically predisposed to multiple-personality disorder.” Braun promulgated these dangerous and unproven convictions to a new generation of psychotherapists through his training videotapes and seminars. “He's definitely seen as a sort of guru in multiple-personality disorder,” Glasgow said.

In October 1997, Braun and his employers had settled a civil lawsuit, paying out \$10.6 million to Mrs Burgus, one of the highest ever awards in a false memory case.

For 25 years, the story of ‘Sybil Dorsett’ from Wisconsin and her 16 personalities has been regarded as the most influential modern narrative of ‘multiple personality disorder’ (MPD). Because of the impeccable professional credentials of Sybil’s psychiatrist, Dr Cornelia Wilbur, a professor at New York’s John Jay College of Criminal Justice, the case seemed immune from criticism – but now, evidence of her own tape recordings has knocked away this foundation of reliability.

Sybil was aged around 30 when she began her 11-year treatment. When Flora Rheta



Schreiber, then a successful writer of psychological profiles, first met Sybil in 1962, she immediately recognised “a history-making case”. Schreiber began writing a largely fictionalised account with the collaboration of both Sybil and Wilbur. Published in 1973, the book *Sybil* sold millions of copies and, in 1977, was made into a two-part TV movie. Both shaped the public perception of psychotherapy and MPD and the case is often cited as an example of how therapy can heal ‘shattered personalities’.

Now, a study presented at the American Psychological Association (APA) meeting in August claims that 25-year-old tape recordings of conversations between Schreiber and Wilbur show Sybil's tale may well have been exaggerated by Dr Wilbur's eagerness to break new ground in MPD research.

Herbert Spiegel, a psychiatrist who had worked with Sybil, had previously dismissed her as “a case of hysteria and not multiple personality” and blamed Wilbur for coaching her patient. Robert Rieber – a psychologist friend of Schreiber who worked with Wilbur at John Jay College – said Schreiber had given him the tapes in 1972 and they languished in his desk, forgotten until 1997, when Spiegel's comments jogged his memory. They document “the fraudulent construction of a multiple personality”, he said.

It is clear from Wilbur's own words that she was not exploring the truth but rather planting the truth as she wanted it to be,” Rieber said in his report. He felt he could reveal this now because Schreiber died in 1988, Wilbur died in 1992 and Sybil in December 1997 (one report says 1988).

Wilbur attributed Sybil's shattered psyche to childhood sexual trauma at the hands of her schizophrenic mother. In one conversation, Wilbur tells Schreiber that she had to list the names of the “personalities” for her patient in order to prompt the right response from Sybil herself. Hypnosis and ‘truth’ drugs were used to pull ever more details from Sybil about these personalities. They were fleshed out by Wilbur and Schreiber as the book progressed, Rieber alleges.

**“IF WE DON’T CALL IT MPD, THEY WON’T WANT IT; IT WON’T SELL”**

The theory of multiple personality looks shakier than ever as more courts rule against misguided psychotherapy; and a classic case is condemned out of its own mouth.

ties” for her patient in order to prompt the right response from Sybil herself. Hypnosis and ‘truth’ drugs were used to pull ever more details from Sybil about these personalities. They were fleshed out by Wilbur and Schreiber as the book progressed, Rieber alleges.

Spiegel concluded that Sybil's so-called personalities arose from Wilbur's therapeutic technique of giving names to various emotional states Sybil experienced. The problem was that Wilbur mistakenly came to believe that they really were distinct personalities, Spiegel said.

According to Spiegel, Sybil told him one day that Wilbur wanted her “to be Helen” when talking about a particular past event.

Spiegel suggested talking about the event just as Sybil. “Then she discovered she didn't have to act like Helen in order to talk about it [...] It became clear Wilbur was coaching her to be these different people,” Spiegel said.

Sybil herself was known to have vacillated over the years on whether or not her story was true. Leah Dickstein of the University of Louisville, who knew Sybil for several years after Wilbur's death, recalled Sybil telling her: “Tell people every word in the book is true.” However, Schreiber is heard on one tape “improperly dismissing” a letter Sybil wrote to Wilbur in which she denies having multiple personalities.

Spiegel also said he told Schreiber that Sybil did not have multiple personalities, and Schreiber replied: “If we don't call it multiple personality, the publisher won't want it; it won't sell.” According to Rieber, Schreiber's misrepresentation of Sybil's story was due more to excitement than mendacity and that he was “quite certain she had convinced herself the story was true.” He added,

“Once the book became a financial success there was no turning back.”

Sources: BURGUS: Chicago Tribune 13 Aug 1998. SYBIL: AP & Reuters 16 Aug, InfoBEAT 17 Aug 1998.

**SYBIL:** Sally Field in the TV movie of the book (above).

KOBAL COLLECTION

## endless voyage of the dumped



AHOY THERE: *Son of Town Hall* was built to protest the amount of waste generated by New York City.

## there's something fishy going on

**A STEEL-EATING MICRO-ORGANISM** appears to be causing trouble in the Irish Republic's main fishing port of Killybegs in County Donegal. The unidentified bug, believed to be a combination of two bacteria, destroys modern steel 20 times faster than ordinary rust. It leaves an orange patch underneath black sludge at the low tide mark on steel piles. The patchy, shiny steel is pitted with tell-tale holes.

Divers working on a harbour survey reported severe corrosion on the town pier and the Black Rock pier, damage attributed to the bug by Joey Murrin, chief executive of the Killybegs Fisherman's Organisation. The bugs have already eaten through piers around the Scottish coast from Ullapool to Shetland. However, a spokesman for the Department of the Marine in Dublin was sceptical that the bug had spread to Ireland, and

suggested that the symptoms were consistent with accelerated low water corrosion, caused by oxygen-producing bacteria.



ACCORDING TO A report in the Lancet in August, something very nasty lurks in river estuaries along the east coast of the

USA and was found in the North Sea last November. Back in 1996, commercial fishermen on the Pocomoke River and

on their skin, looking like cuts. Some of the fishermen felt as if they had been stung and began to suffer from headaches, weight loss, skin irritation and – perhaps the most disconcerting of all – disorientation and amnesia. Some began car journeys and couldn't remember where they were going or the purpose of their journey; others forgot their own phone numbers or left behind routine fishing equipment when they boarded their boats.

The symptoms amounted to a new clinical syndrome, but the victims recovered after three to six months. When fish mortality soared in 1997, experts investigated and put the finger on a dinoflagellate called *Pfiesteria piscicida*, only about 0.02mm in diameter but more frightening than several Godzillas. *Irish Times*, 11 Aug; *D. Mail*, 14 Aug; *Western Mail*, 15 Aug 1998.



## STRANGE DAYS

# ALIEN ZOO

**KARL SHUKER**  
with the latest  
from planet  
cryptozoology

### AT LAST - OLIVER UNMASKED

After more than two decades of controversy, the identity of the mysterious ape Oliver, now residing at a Texan animal sanctuary called Primarily Primates, has finally been resolved.

Over the past 25 years, many identities have been proposed, including such dramatic suggestions as a totally new species of chimpanzee, and even a human-chimp hybrid. In 1997, however, Trinity University geneticist Dr John J Ely and Texas University biologist Dr Charleen M Moore announced that they would be conducting chromosomal and DNA analyses of Oliver in a bid to establish conclusively his taxonomic identity [see *FT95:15; 99:12*].

Their findings have now been published, which reveal that Oliver has 24 pairs of chromosomes (normal for chimpanzees) and chromosome banding patterns distinguishing him from humans and from the bonobo (pygmy chimpanzee) *Pan paniscus* but consistent with those of the common chimpanzee *Pan troglodytes*. The results obtained by sequencing a 312 bp region of his mt-DNA (mitochondrial DNA) D-loop region yielded a very close correspondence with central/western African chimps *P. t. troglodytes* – and especially with a specimen known to have originated in Gabon.

In short, Oliver is merely a common chimp most probably of western African provenance (an identity and origin that I predicted, incidentally, in *Man and Beast*, a Reader's Digest cryptozoology volume published in 1993). John J Ely, et al., 'Chromosomal and mtDNA analysis of Oliver', *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, vol. 105, pp. 395-403 (1998).

### RIGHT BACK WHERE THEY STARTED FROM

According to Conservation Minister Nick Smith, who announced their discovery, a number of whales currently present in the Southern Ocean whale sanctuary off New Zealand's far-south Auckland Islands may be remnants of a southern right whale population previously thought to have been annihilated by hunters at least a century ago.

# cerned, sealed, delivered

**ANDY AND SANDY** Thorne of Puddletown, Dorset, had tried to start a family ever since they were married five years ago. Last year, Mrs Thorne, a 34-year-old gardener, decided to try for conception on the 21ft (6.4m) penis of the Cerne Abbas giant in Dorset, believed by many to be a fertility symbol carved into the chalk hillside 2,000 years ago or more. They approached white witch Kevin Carlon, leader of the Covenant of Earth Magic, after hearing how he had helped another couple in the same way. Mr Carlon sent them a special crystal to keep with them when they made love on the giant member on a full moon night last September, their fifth wedding anniversary. At exactly the same time, he performed a rite on another hill figure, the Long Man of Wilmington in Sussex.

Two months later, Sandy found she was pregnant, and in July 1998, she gave birth to a son named Ryan Patrick. The National Trust, fearing that such "pagan activities" could erode the giant's outline, have now put up a "contraceptive" fence around the site.

On 14 May, an American jeans firm called Big Smith Jeans gave the priapic giant a pair of trousers 120ft (36m) long made of plastic mesh. This was hardly in the interests of modesty, as the erect phallus remained largely above the waistband. Although the monument wasn't damaged, the National Trust was irritated that its permission had not been sought.

There is considerable doubt that the giant is more than 350 years old. His fame spread after the Dorchester-Sherborne turnpike was opened in 1761, passing within half a mile of him.

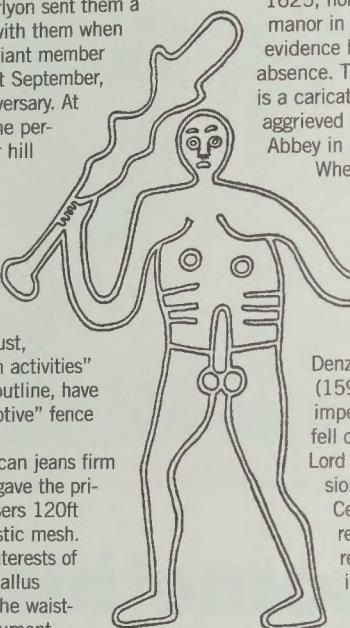
Romantic 18th century antiquarians like Sir William Stukeley saw him as a Romano-British depiction of the god Hercules; later scholars as a Celtic fertility symbol. Such views became received wisdom – as late as the 1975 Royal

Commission on Historical Monuments.

However, the figure is not mentioned in any document until the Cerne Abbas churchwarden's accounts for 1694, when three shillings was paid for "repaireing of the Giant". No 17th century deeds or field names refer to the figure, despite its obvious advantages as a landmark. There is no mention of the giant in national surveys by antiquaries like Camden, nor in notes of local scholars such as Gerard who had passed through Cerne in 1625, nor in a very detailed survey of the manor in 1617. On the other hand, absence of evidence before 1694 is not evidence of absence. There's a local tradition that the Giant is a caricature of the last Abbot of Cerne, cut (by aggrieved monks?) at the dissolution of Cerne Abbey in 1539.

When the Revd John Hutchins, author of the *History and Antiquities of Dorset*, visited Cerne in about 1750, the steward of the lord of the manor insisted that the figure had been "cut out in Lord Hollis' time". Denzil Holles, 1st Baron Holles of Ifield (1599-1680), was a prominent MP impeached for high treason in 1642, who fell out with Oliver Cromwell when the Lord Protector developed royalist pretensions. Holles had acquired the manor of Cerne by his second marriage and retired there in 1654, where he remained until travelling abroad in 1662.

The Dorset scholar J H Bettey has suggested that Holles was driven by fury against Cromwell to depict him as a priapic Hercules – a wonderfully durable and spectacular lampoon. Holles was certainly hot-tempered and had written with great venom about the Protector in his memoirs; and there were many prior examples of Cromwell being depicted as the British Hercules, sometimes wielding a club. Sources: 'The Cerne Giant' by Jeremy Harte in 3rd Stone Magazine, Summer/Autumn 1996; Sunday Times, 5 April; Western Daily Press, 6 April; Times, 15 May; D. Telegraph, 15 May, 21 Aug; D. Mail, Express, Mirror, 5 Aug; Dorset Eve. Echo, 5+19 Aug 1998.



### lizard lunch

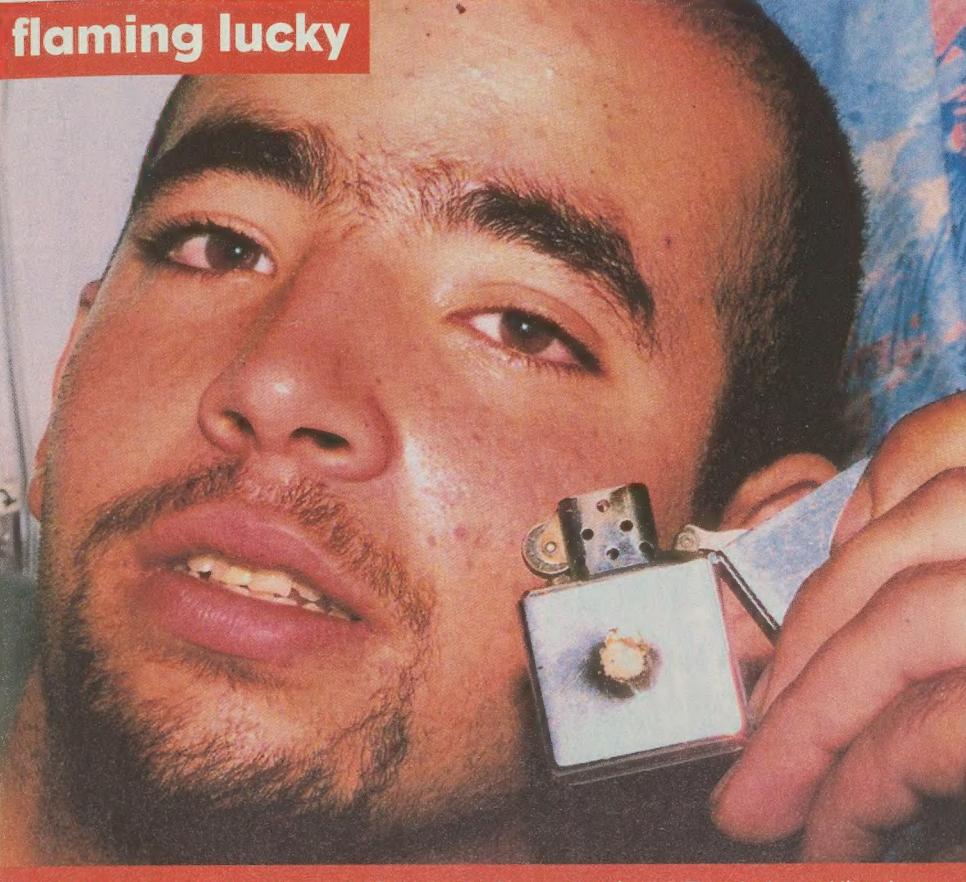
**SANDEEP CHATTERJEE**, AN 18-year-old vagabond from Sakchi in the Indian state of Jamshedpur, survives on lizards, snakes and all sorts of reptiles and insects which he catches and washes down with petrol. Given a litre (35 fl oz) of petrol to drink, he will demonstrate how he eats a live lizard within minutes. At the age of five, he began stealing petrol from vehicles and gulping it down in one go. He says he can't live without his staple diet and lizards are his favourite. He also relishes dog and cat meat, having a preference for kittens. However, he sometimes eats roti and rice just for a change. His unusual diet has made him notorious in Sakchi and his parents kicked him out of the house after he matriculated. The youth has not complained of any health problems.

*Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), 21 Mar 1998.



A.P. DUBE

## flaming lucky



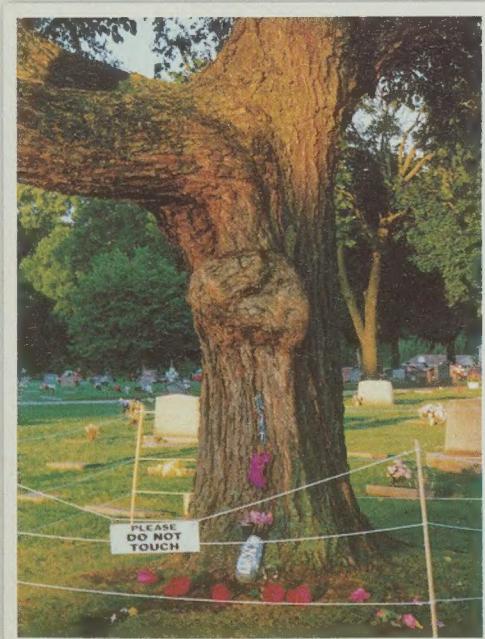
**MARCOS ZONAH**, 20, of Asod, Lebanon, holds up a cigarette lighter which appears to have saved his life.

Zonah was one of five Israeli

soldiers wounded in an ambush in Southern Lebanon on 6 August, in which a sixth soldier was killed. The lighter, which was struck by a bullet, was in his upper left pocket.

The lucky soldier became "Marcus Zanona" in the *Scottish Daily Record*, and "Marcus Zanone" in the *Examiner* (Cork, Eire). *Jerusalem Post*, 8 Aug 1998.

## SIMULACRACORNER



This outgrowth on a tree in Calvary Cemetery, Quincy, Illinois, has been attracting a stream of the curious and faithful, who see it as an acheropite ("a likeness not made by the hands of men") of Jesus Christ holding a lamb.

The cemetery was visited by 2,000 people on 28 July, with a similar number the next day. Flowers adorn the base of the tree and a rosary hangs from the figure's "robe". The photograph was sent in by David and Cheri Landis of Shorewood, Wisconsin, and was taken by Cheri's father, Dwain Preston, who lives in Quincy. "After studying the photograph for days," writes David, "we have both concluded that it does in fact look like Jesus carrying a, uh... log." (see *Quincy Herald*, 1 Aug 1998.)

We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures, or any curious images. Send them to the editorial post box (with a stamped addressed envelope or international reply coupon) and we'll pay a fiver or ten dollars for any we use.

## ALIEN ZOO



CONTINUED  
Zealand's far-south Auckland Islands may be remnants of a southern right whale population previously thought to have been annihilated by hunters at least a century ago.

This exciting possibility is indicated by analysis of DNA samples taken from them. *Hong Kong Standard*, 17 Jan 1998.

### THE STRANGE CASE OF THE CRYPTIC CRYPTO-MACS

*FT* reader Alan Pringle recently brought to my attention a very intriguing mystery of the cryptozoologically-related kind. Back in 1970 or 1971, at a friend's home in Scotland, he saw a complete set of a magazine partwork series containing at least 30-40 issues, on an encyclopaedic or scientific theme (possibly aimed at children), but whose title he cannot recall.

However, it was not their contents, but their covers, that attracted his particular interest and attention, because each issue's back cover featured an animal or entity from the myths and legends of the world, including a number that have cryptozoological relevance. A very dramatic, full-colour illustration of the creature occupied one half of the cover's page, with accompanying text occupying the other half.

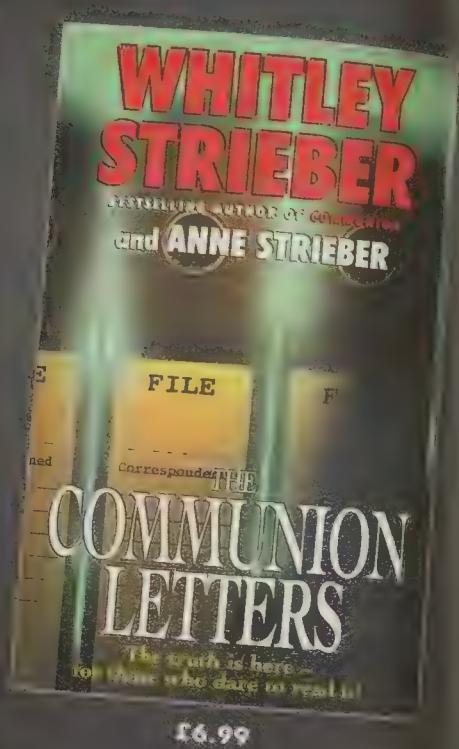
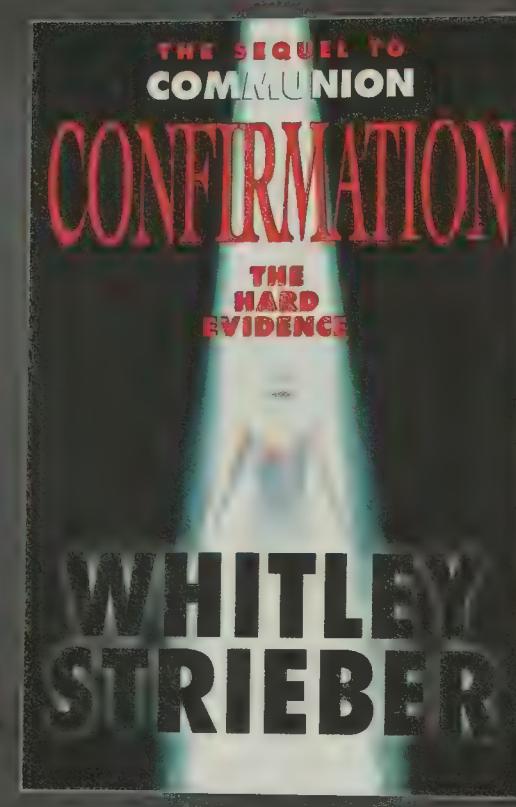
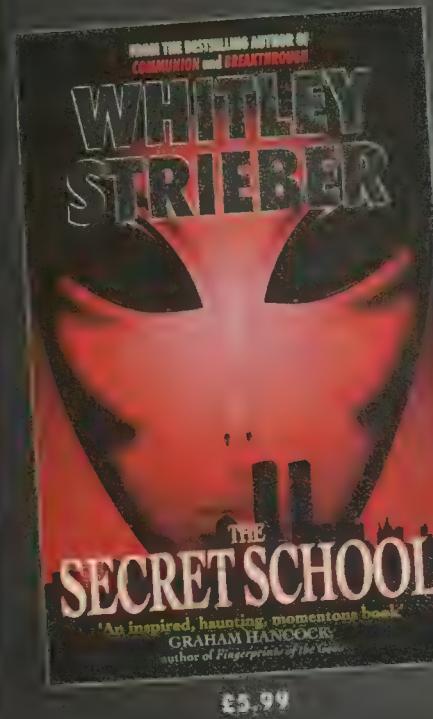
The creatures that Alan can definitely remember appearing in this set of covers included the western dragon, eastern dragon, siren, tokoloshe, leshy, thunderbird, Midgard serpent, Assyrian winged bull, minotaur, centaur, bunyip, Egyptian ammut (soul eater), sphinx, and harpy. Others that he thinks may have been present include the werewolf, vampire, unicorn, cyclops, zombie and banshee.

Alan has never seen this partwork again (and has long since lost contact with the friend who owned it), but he can still vividly recall some of the back covers due to their very eyecatching nature. I have certainly never seen them, and despite their dramatic appeal they do not seem to have been reproduced in any other publication.

So what was this mysterious partwork? If there is any *FT* reader who has seen it (or, better still, owns an edition of it!), or can offer any extra details, we'd love to hear from you.

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## a miscellany of madness

### HOOFING IT

While holidaying near Blewbury, Berkshire, 20 years ago, Alec Martin of Bolton, Lancs, looked down from a small hill on a field of cows. The herd dispersed to the edge and started trotting round the perimeter in single file, first clockwise, then anti-clockwise. Then the cows at the corners of the field trotted in a straight line to the diagonally opposite corner. Finally, several cows paired up to circle each other in different corners, the whole effect appearing symmetrical. From Mr Martin's vantage point, the cows seemed to be doing a barn dance. If any reader can offer an explanation for this bizarre behaviour, please write to *Fortean Times*. *D.Mail*, 25 June 1998.

### CULL YELLERS

Dan Byrne from Weston-super-Mare in Somerset was researching local history when he came across a reference to "gull yelling". In the 18th century, two men were employed full-time to drive off gulls on Birnbeck Island. Fishermen would stake out nets at low tide, and high tide would leave the nets bulging with fish, providing easy pickings for the local gulls. According to local historians, the two gull yellers could be heard in Conglesbury, 8.5 miles (14km) away, which, as Mr Byrne points out, is "some shout". The *Guinness Book of Records* has no mention of 'distance' shouting, but Mr Byrne believes gull yelling should be revived in the form of a competition, with perhaps Brian 'Pluto' Venn, the 1995-97 world champion town crier, having the first shout. *North Somerset Mercury*, 16 April 1998.

### INFO OVERLOAD

After a storm in early June, retired chemist Bill Drinkard, 69, of Wilmington, Delaware, found that his no-frills television set was receiving – on every channel – a black rectangle covering more than half the screen with text scrolling line by line. The box held eight lines of text about current events. In the afternoon, the text was lengthy, but first thing in the morning, it was a line or two of what appeared to be banter. None of his neighbours' sets picked up the transmissions. Concerned that this might be sensitive information from another country, or perhaps a threat to the United States, he called the Federal Communications Commission, but they said there was nothing they could do.

The transmissions were in fact stories that Reuters news service reporters were

filming from around the world. The banter was probably reporters sending each other e-mail. Somehow, the transmissions were zapping into Drinkard's TV set on the way to Hauppauge, New York state. The experts, including Reuters' technical and security staff, were unable to give an explanation. The best that the IT helpline at the University of Delaware could suggest was that Drinkard's portable aerial had been hit by lightning. *Wilmington (DE) News-Journal*, 10 June 1998.

### FUNERAL FURORE

Just before dawn on 22 October 1997, the widow and two daughters of Clemente Dominguez, an immigrant from Cuba who had died of a stroke at 49, were keeping watch over his body in a funeral home in the little Havana district of Miami when about 10 men burst in. They per-



formed the rituals of the Santeria cult, a variation of Voodoo, putting ash in the sign of the cross on his forehead, placing a bottle of rum in his right hand and lighting candles.

The women were ordered to leave the chapel of rest. From outside they could hear ritual chanting, then angry shouting, then gunfire. The police later found furniture tipped over, bullet holes in the walls and blood on the floor. A man was found staggering down the street with a gun in his hand and a bullet wound in his chest. Another seven "rather rough-looking characters" were rounded up.

No one would tell the police anything. The wounded man claimed to have been shot in a robbery and no one admitted to an argument. An almost identical shooting occurred at the same funeral home during a Santeria wake in 1993. Lieut. Bill

Schwartz of Miami police said the men were Marielitos – Cubans who had come to Miami in the 1980 Mariel boatlift, and apparently had no connection to the mourning family. "It's all a great puzzle," he said. [R] 23 Oct; *D. Telegraph*, 25 Oct 1997.

### PARKING IN THE TWILIGHT ZONE

Something strange is reported in Union Walk public car park in Hereford. Motorists have found that their radio-controlled locking and immobilising gadgets fail to work there, forcing them to call garages and motoring organisations to tow their vehicles out of the bewitched place. Once the cars are a few yards outside, the remote control unlocking systems work again. Devices using infra red signals are unaffected. Is equipment in nearby Hereford County hospital to blame, or possibly a radio transmitter somewhere? "We have checked all the equipment that we operate in the area," said John Collyer, transport manager of Hereford Council. "None gives off a frequency that could interfere with the cars. There is nothing more that we can do." *D. Mail*, 16 May 1998.

### MONKEY VANISHES

Paul Barnes of Oswestry saw a dead monkey by the side of the road near Llansantffraid in mid-Wales on 10 July. "When I first saw it, I thought it was a hide," he said. "It was quite big. I slowed down and put the window down and there was a foul smell. It was obviously a body and not just a hide." The body was seen the following morning by a woman motorist who noticed a pink face and described it as a large monkey. The police and the RSPCA did not

have any reports of missing pets or rare animals from private collections and the remains had vanished from the roadside by Saturday afternoon. *Shropshire Star*, 16 July 1998.

### SQUIRREL TOKERS

Squirrels at the Moors Valley Country Park near West Moors, Dorset, appear to have become addicted to tobacco from discarded cigarette ends. Many also seem to be addicted to sugar after feeding on rubbish dumped by picnickers. Staff have spotted the animals ripping the weed from old butts and raiding tables and bins in their search for nicotine and sugar. A minority have started nipping visitors who refuse to throw them scraps from their picnic tables. A spokeswoman from the park hastened to add that most squirrels were "extremely well behaved". *D. Telegraph*, 21 April 1998.



STRANGE DAYS

## FORTEAN BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

AT FIRST CLANCE THE SMALL TOWN OF HEREFORD SEEMS TO BE A HIGHLY UNLIKELY PLACE TO FIND ANSWERS TO THE UFO MYSTERY BUT, AS MARK PILKINGTON DISCOVERS, APPEARANCES CAN BE DECEPTIVE...



**T**he strumming of unholy guitars comes from inside Hertford's Castle Hall Community Centre. It's Sunday and "The Hertford Community Church Welcomes All". Outside, posters advertise future attractions - a Siamese cat show, Texan line dancing, aerobics with Ruth, an antiques fair and today's next event, "UFOs - The Global Evidence".

A queue, primarily male and middle aged, is already building, held up at the door by a powerfully built man in a dark suit, a bouncer. At a UFO conference? With numbers one and four of the "UFO Public Nuisance Hall of Fame" (<http://ufomind.com/ufo/updates/1998/mar/m29-002.shtml>) in attendance, this was perhaps a wise move. Headline act Steven Greer, nuisance number one and International Director of the Center for the Study of Extraterrestrial Intelligence (CSETI), has certainly ruffled a few feathers in the global UFO community with his dual claims of astral plane ET contact and high level talks with US government and military personnel. Michael Hesemann, voted nuisance number four, is editor of Germany's *Magazine 2000*. UK researcher Nick Redfern, while not officially a nuisance, may still want to glance over his shoulder occasionally - his investigations have uncovered reams of formerly classified Ministry of Defence files relating to matters flying and unidentified.

Redfern was first up; quiet, unassuming and, armed with a battery of slides of official documentation, perhaps not quite exciting enough to hold the attention so early on a

aren't taken very seriously, serviced with a smile and a raised eyebrow by their PR front, until recently played to the hilt by an apparently unsuspecting Nick Pope. Meanwhile

the really juicy material, gleaned from the armed forces, police, pilots and others considered less likely to confuse planets for spacecraft - though often they still do - is secreted away in cryptically named departments such as AI Tech 5B, DSTI, DI 55 and AMOC.

Intriguingly, Redfern was able to show that some MOD departments did actually send investigators round to speak to witnesses. One of these was the military's intelligence police force, the Provost and Security Services (P&SS), until recently based at the infamous Rudloe Manor in Wiltshire, a hub for international military communications. This unassuming country house is reputed to sit on top of a Thunderbirds-style underground base the size of 12 football pitches, complete, some claim, with a high speed subterranean rail link to 10 Downing Street.

One recently uncovered 1962 document tells of a



COVERT UP: Nick Redfern

Sunday morning. He does, however, have an important point to make - that the British Ministry of Defence takes its UFOs very seriously, and has been actively investigating them for at least 45 years.

Like their US counterparts, the British military establishment has a multi-tiered system for reporting UFOs. Perhaps not unsurprisingly, public reports of lights in the sky

P&SS officer despatched to visit a woman after she reported a UFO sighting. This same woman later described three visits by a man dressed in full MIB attire. He took the details of her story, warned her not to tell anybody else, then left in a black Jaguar. Sound familiar? Redfern and fellow UFO

author Jenny Randles have also traced MIB-style investigators to other Defence Intelligence departments, namely DI55, DI64 and DI61. Expect to hear a lot more on this one.

Other eye-opening reports described 100ft- (30m-) wide flying triangles hovering over Richmond, London, in 1965; a Cheshire policeman's 1966 report of a 30ft (9m) humming, glowing saucer, and a mid-1960s document detailing rejected approaches made to the USSR about setting up a joint UFO study programme. An indication of how seriously the UFO situation was taken? Or just a cheeky attempt to wheedle intelligence titbits from the enemy? More recently a 1992 report - forwarded to both American and Australian Intelligence - concerns information gathered by an MOD employee at a UFO conference in China. At this point in the talk

everybody looked around. I was the only one taking notes.

Of all the cases Redfern looked at, only one described a "genuine UFO", a cigar-shaped object that passed a little too close to an Air Italia passenger jet near a missile range in 1991. Hmm, it's not hard to see why so many people think the government is telling porkies about UFOs.

The softly-spoken Redfern puts forward a highly convincing case for a genuine mystery and, unusually in this field, refrains from using the evidence to push his own belief in alien visitors. "I do think a certain percentage are extraterrestrial," he admits, "but it doesn't mean I'll discount



WAR OF THE WORDS: Speaker Michael Hesemann confronts Rob Irving outside the lecture hall before his presentation.

the possibility of some being natural phenomena or secret aircraft. But if we were flying the types of aircraft described by witnesses in the Forties and Fifties, then today we could easily have taken out Saddam Hussein; we'd have seen them used in Vietnam and the Falklands."

Frantic, high-pitched shouting from the other end of the foyer ends our discussion. "You are a psychopath, you are sick. People like you are a virus, contaminating the beauty of the phenomenon. And you know what we do with bugs in Germany..." It's our next speaker, Michael Hesemann. He's just bumped into Rob Irving, who has raised questions about Hesemann's academic credentials; "You are a nothing, a little shit," Hesemann screams before entering the auditorium, more than a little flustered.

**W**ith his endless patter and compulsive name dropping, Hesemann exudes all the credibility

of a TV game show host. And are those swirling diamanté galaxies twinkling on the buckles of his shoes? He paces anxiously across the stage, wearing the fixed grin of a man who died happy and sweating profusely. Before he begins his presentation, he warns us of the evils of hoaxers, and advises us not to believe everything we read in magazines as there's a lot of rubbish out there.

Somewhat ironic coming from a gentleman who edits *Magazine 2000* and has backed both Billy Meier and the Roswell autopsy footage. Then it's down to business, running us through his favourite UFO video clips of the last few years, Volume One available at the merchandise stand. Most of what follows is apparently chosen for its glitter factor rather than any inherent credibility. After 45 minutes or so of indistinct glowings, zoomings, flashings and wobblings you're left with the feeling that if there really were this

many UFOs in the skies, there'd be no room left to fly a kite, let alone fleets of civilian and military aircraft.

Hesemann doesn't help matters; "Enhance the contrast. Add colour. Lower the brightness", he yells to the projection booth as Tim Edwards' famous flying cigar fails to show in the blue Colorado skies. "This one has a beating heart - no hoaxter could do that," he marvels over a pulsing light filmed by Mexican contactee Carlos Diaz. Unsurprisingly, the clearest object caught on camera is last year's Ray Harryhausen style saucer over Mexico city; "You can't fake eyewitness testimony", he says sincerely as a pair of un-named teenage girls point skywards and laugh hysterically before retreating off camera.

At one point CSETI leader Steven Greer, seated in the front row, interjects to say he's seen the glowing spheres on screen himself - just the other night in fact, over Alton Barnes in Wiltshire (see FT115:24-25). He even assists Hesemann in the technical department, filling the auditorium with blazing light once the videos are over, rudely awakening slumbering audience members.

When it comes to his own presentation, however, Greer is a true professional. Standing impassively before the video screen, he's a portrait of enforced calm, a man very much in control. Syrupy, rhythmic New Age sounds burble from the speakers as harmonious images of the cosmos and UFOs float by in a soothing, mildly hypnotic display. As the lights fade gen-

THIS ONE HAS A BEATING HEART - NO HOAXER COULD DO THAT



So what of "The Global Evidence"? It doesn't seem likely that Greer's metaphysical science fiction will ever provide any, but Redfern's documents and even some of the footage hijacked by Hesemann remind us that, wherever the answers may lie, the UFO question is still one worth asking.

DREAMLAND: Steven Greer

tly up, Greer begins to speak via a radio mic, but feedback and strange garbled voices interrupt him. He fiddles with the receiver, causing further sonic disturbance. "This always happens - maybe it's the CIA." He's probably joking.

Eventually things return to Greer frequency. He speaks with a sense of urgency and conviction, using forceful hand gestures to emphasise almost every point. We are warned of the cover-up posing a "direct threat to world security and the survival of life on Earth" and told of Greer's meetings with the rich and powerful. While Hesemann dropped the names of fellow researchers, Greer has politicians, journalists, TV stars and billionaires tumbling from his mouth. He tantalises us with casual asides about smoking guns - "Marilyn Monroe, she opened her mouth to the wrong people." The momentum increases and the claims become ever grander. Then, suddenly, the wave breaks and we are travelling through interstellar space, surfing on quantum realities.

**T**his is how it is. Using the now familiar back-engineered alien craft, the Military Industrial Complex is waging war with the alien presence here on Earth. Billions of dollars are being siphoned off the Black Budget to fund an enlarging interstellar space navy capable of blasting the aliens out of the ether. Why? Because the aliens would help us make the transition from fossil fuel energy to superluminal quantum systems, to breach "the crossing point of light" through "holographic non-local technologies." L Ron Hubbard couldn't have put it better himself. "This is science, not mysticism," informs Greer, but, two hours later, as his statements grow ever wilder, he has yet to produce a single fact to back them up. "Do we have the will, the vision, the courage? We call it vectoring in. It's time travel - like lucid dreaming. That's why Area 51 is called Dreamland."

It's been almost 18 months since CSETI claimed to have briefed senators and congressmen on the UFO situation. The high-ranking military witnesses Greer is supposed to have waiting in the wings remain ever silent and anonymous. He says they need \$5 million to get their point across - in a multi-media spectacular that will shock the world's governments into spilling the beans and rip the scales from the eyes of the unsuspecting public. And until then? Greer will just keep on talking.



# ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD

WE HAVE SEEN THE FUTURE AND IT COULD BE DAMANHUR-SHAPED. **ROB IRVING** INVESTIGATES THIS SMALL COMMUNITY LIVING HIDDEN IN A VALLEY IN THE ITALIAN ALPS AND FINDS NOT ONLY A TIME MACHINE BUT A BEAUTIFUL TEMPLE CARVED INSIDE THE MOUNTAIN.



A ridge high over Loch Ness, barely perceptible rain dampening everything but my enthusiasm for being here. Across the loch, Aleister Crowley's estate lies shrouded in mist and ominousness. "You know", my host tells me, "Loch Ness is angled at 51 degrees 51 minutes and 14.3 seconds from true north, precisely the same angle as the slope of the Great Pyramid". I didn't know.

Philosopher/poet/playwright Neil Oram settled this stretch of Creaguanen Forest 30 years ago attempting to combat the dark forces exemplified by Crowley. That now dealt with, we find him the unlikely laird of 100 acres of lichen-covered trees and heather, replete with all the trappings of hippydom; multicoloured ley-line markers, an ancient mound, a smattering of caravans and Amerindian-style dwellings, his stone cottage (no toilet, but a useful collection of back issues of the *Cerealogist*) and a studio attracting a brisk trade in fine pottery.

Like all good storytellers, to Oram convincing improbability outweighs unconvincing probability. "I find that if I accept these things as true they make much more sense", he tells me. The journey is becoming disproportionately longer with every step. Oram rambles on ahead until we reach some kind of summit, and what I've come to see: a Damanhurian Spheroself, rumoured to be a time machine, hidden under a large ceramic toadstool and a clump of moss. He lifts them to reveal an intricate tangle of coils and spirals of copper wire, nesting a liquid-filled glass sphere. "Alchemical liquid", Oram tells me. So he's been told. It certainly looks functional. Instinctively I reach to touch the device, but Oram stops me. "It's already been activated", he says, pointing to a tiny spiraliform lever on its side.

The Spheroself was activated at the revival of Oram's 24-hour play, *The Warp*, directed by Ken Campbell. Campbell had invited the Damanhurians to provide spiritual uplift to flagging cast and audience, and to perhaps sell some books. They laid down a spiral in string as a meditative walkway, and painted De Kooning-like 'Selfie' abstracts depicting the mind's many facets, an idea central to their philosophy. Their stall featured a choir of houseplants connected to galvanometers and midi sequencers, each subtle change in resistance manifesting as the sound a xylophonist on speed might make. At 6am, the actor Brian Cox wandered over, bleary-eyed. He took a wire in each hand, and suddenly manic xylophone turned to sleepy theremin. In Laurel Canyon everyone should have one: "Jeez, this is strange... really weird!", he exclaimed, suddenly awakened. "Where can I get one of these?"

Picturesque Valchiusella, 30 miles (48km) north of Turin, Italy, is home to around 800 members of the Federation of Damanhur. In summer, whole orchestras of trees flood the valley, becoming the ideal soundtrack to the playful neo-ancient style of their outer temple, and the spiral path laid with stones through the forest. Mysticism has traditionally fuelled the world's greatest art. Likewise, the Damanhurians strive for divinity through aesthetic devotion. A synthesis of Nature, tranquility and creativity is, they say, a way of sat-

urating the physical senses, and only when this is achieved can we access the inner spirit, our true self. In keeping with this, once established within the community each member assumes the names of the plant and animal which best reflect their nature. It is a community at one with its environs.

Not everyone sees it this way. Following the spate of mass cult suicides in 1996, for instance, the BBC's *Newsnight* described Damanhur in similar terms: a potential disaster waiting to happen. More recently the *Sunday Times* focused on concerns voiced by a member of the Italian Interior Ministry, and voiced their own for the teenage writings of the Federation's charismatic founder, Oberto Airaudi. They cast him as pious autocrat controlling a multi-billion lire industry at the expense of his gullible devotees. In both instances, beauty and creativity outshone the nay-sayers. Mainly the members are engaged in nothing more sinister than producing decorative glassworks, quality fabrics and foodstuffs for Europe's most exclusive stores. Others make art, or educate the community's children, or spend

their days studying at the Damanhurian University (a two-day seminar in, say, Past Life Research costing visitors around £120).

Meeting Airaudi one is struck by a distinct lack of the oddness he has created around him; a somewhat secular presence amid all the New Age froth. However, there is no doubting the power behind his enigmatic smile. Like the hermetic Fool he carries a big stick: "Oberito says", reported *Newsnight*, "is a phrase you hear a lot around Damanhur".

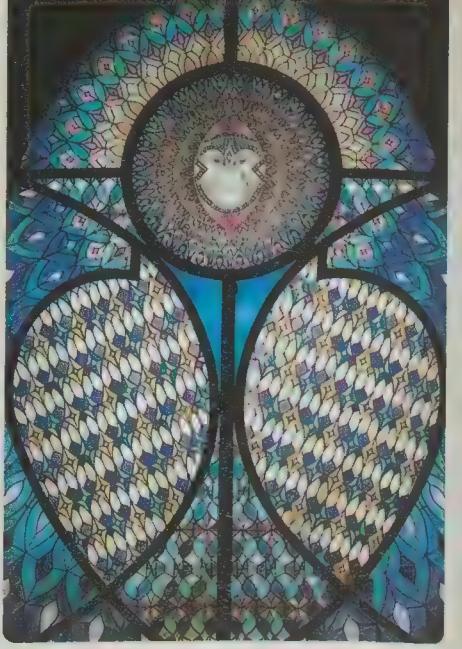
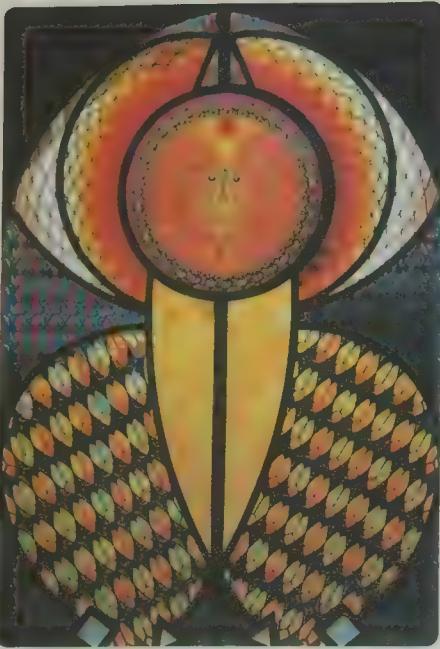
Yet, beyond these ideals lie deeper secrets, and perhaps the source of the misconceptions. In 1992, following threats of public exposure by a disgruntled former member, Airaudi revealed that for 16 years he and 90 brethren had been surreptitiously burrowing into the mountain. Their *pièce de résistance* had evaded discovery until then. Understandably so. Through an ostensibly disused shed, a narrow entrance leads into a subterranean complex of passages. They are decorated with symbols and hieroglyphs, as if to say "Egypt here we come". Remote-controlled panels lead to deeper mysteries; the inner temples, their walls adorned with paintings of endangered species, not so much as an object of worship but referential

EVERY ELEMENT IS IMBUED WITH MEANING DERIVED FROM ANCIENT CULTURE



SPHERE: Neil Oram and his Spheroself (above and top). The Water Hall of the Temple of Mankind (right).





**NATURAL GLASS:** Stained glass is used in the door of the Sun (left) and the door of the Moon (right) which lead into the Earth Hall and also in the Hall of Mirrors (centre).

sanctity. Press the Pharaoh's nose and "Apriti Sesamo!", a wall slides open, inviting us further into the labyrinth. This may not be entirely true, but captures an inherent playfulness designed to impress that we can never quite know how or when a door will open to the next stage of spiritual development. Set into one ceiling is a vast cupola of Tiffany glass, lit to give an impression of open sky. Another gleams with gold leaf. The floors are polished granite, edged in multicoloured mosaic. Consisting of seven main chambers over five storeys, the Damanhurian Temple of Mankind cannot fail to astound even the wariest visitor.

**M**edia glimpses have thus far raised only a corner of the veil, however. To the Damanhurian scientific research teams, as well as its aesthetic delights the Temple's main function is intrinsic to its placement within a thick seam of mylonite – a rare mineral they believe absorbs and accumulates the tectonic energy which creates it. An integrated system of water pipes and cables are connected to this stratum, providing a direct link to the Earth's powerful undercurrents, or "synchronic lines" in Damanhur speak. On Damanhur's map of these lines, only this mountain and the Tibetan highlands<sup>2</sup> are situated on quadruple "shining knots" of convergence – twin navels of the *Umbilicus Telluris*. The Temple, it is claimed, generates energy on a scale only dreamed of by physicists and Umberto Eco.

Accordingly, the application of creative energy, manifesting as art and song in the arcane language of Damanhur, is measurable in units. Once converted, it is channelled through even the subtlest of energy-lines: Stonehenge, Silbury Hill, the nearby crop circles and even Oram's tumuli are all connected – their accumulated power feeding back into the Temple, the fulcrum of creativity. "Art is an instrument to saturate the senses, which is why there's so much of it here", Airaudi confirms.

Deeper still, past the alchemy laboratories and a bank of Selfic spheres (larger but every bit as intricate as the baby nursing at Loch Ness) is a time cabin, which also doubles as a healing cabinet. By these technologies the Damanhurians claim the ability to travel through time at will, thereby gaining unique access to the artistic masters of the past. To them, history is an arena of active participation.

As with conventional astronauts, only the fittest

and most mentally agile are selected for these missions. The Damanhurian equivalent of Neil Armstrong goes by the name of Gorilla Eucalypto, and through him comes documentary evidence that these experiments are not just the product of, well, mental agility. The report of his trip of 19 January 1994 to 2727BC, for example, is titled "Plant Matter Brought Back by Gorilla"<sup>2</sup>, or, days later, a significantly longer haul to 4719BC, "Gorilla Meets Local People and Eats Some Blueberries".

Otherwise, the expeditions offer more practical benefits. By facilitating the introduction of new technology into ancient society – such as a boat's rudder, encouraging trade between river-dwellers – the benefits ripple through history to the present. In essence, effecting change retroactively. That's one small step for Gorilla, one giant leap forward for mankind. This is said to happen under the gaze of highly-trained observers, who take over the bodies of ancient wildlife, mainly birds – their sight somehow projected back to the Temple through the Selfic spheres, acting much like a seer's crystal ball.

And then there was the time Gorilla swung so far back (61,000 years, beyond Lemuria) that he came upon an "intermediate station, linked to Atlantis", where he found beings engaged in similar experiments, but much more advanced. "I told them of Damanhur and our project", he reported later. "They were amazed, and respected what we were doing. Indeed, they were very aware

of our reality and where we were going."

This displaced tense gives the clue to Airaudi's circumvention of accepted wisdom. Reality, he believes, is a symphony of correspondence, and the ability to travel between dimensions is simply a matter of learning how to harmonise with it. Of course, to fully understand these ideas requires a working grasp of esoteric physics, and a course of training well beyond FT's budget.

Instead, Airaudi pointed me toward an article in the New Age magazine, *Kindred Spirit*. Despite its length, the authors state that there is simply not enough space to go into details of Airaudi's claims, which would require "several volumes of dense scientific explanation". Suffice to say, they assert, that the claims are based upon his expert grasp of quantum physics. Of course, by present understanding, any suggestion that space-time is rendered subjective at quantum level would be premature. Making sense of the Damanhurian web-pages relating to time travel is to experience a Sokalean nightmare of post-modern relativism (see pages 46-47). It is safe to say that these

"several volumes" have never been written. Nor are they likely to be. "It is obvious that we are not interested in giving any clues how we do it", Damanhur's public relations representative, Esperide Ananas (Skipper butterflies in the Garden of Hesperides Pineapple) told me. Little wonder, as Ananas admitted, that even some Damanhurians are sceptical.

Conversely, in Jeff Merrifield's book *Damanhur, The Real Dream*<sup>3</sup> – a pleasurable, albeit wort-free account of the community's life and philosophy – he suggests that in order to understand their methods we must empty our minds of conventional physics. "We are dealing here", he writes, "not with laws to explain and work within the physical world, but with laws that bring our world, our universe, into existence. Laws that originate in the Realm of the Real".

Generally, whatever invites recourse to pseudoscience – a yearning to impress the impressionable, the honest rejection of accepted wisdom, or merely ignorance of it – any device that operates at the 'cutting edge' of science is a useful tool. Naturally, esotericists are guardians of mysteries that are unfathomable to the rest of us. Often the reason their ideas are inherently mysterious,

though, is that they are inherently nonsensical. As Artepheus warned, if we try to make ordinary and literal sense of the words of the hermetic masters, we would soon find ourselves in the twists of a labyrinth from which we are unable to escape. Ariadne's golden thread may now be spun in the form of intensive seminars, but which way does it ultimately lead? Science and metascience (or, for that matter, science and art) need not be in competition, however, and nonsense can be a valuable aid to unfettering prejudice.

**F**or elemental societies it is the shamanic 'walkers between worlds' who journey deep into this territory, returning with stories which soon develop into the myths of their community – these myths kept alive by constant recreation through art. Such is art's power that it is not merely the imitation of nature but the means by which nature

reveals itself to us. I have heard it said that Airaudi travelled from the future to introduce us to Selfic technology. Although he is reluctant to state this publicly, the theme is evident in his early science fiction writings, which have themselves become the creation myths of Damanhur.

So why put a Spheroself at Loch Ness? Oram wasn't entirely sure. "My guess", he told me, "is that the time traveller, by tuning in, is activating it. In turn they access the dimension for which the Spheroself itself is an analogue". I tramped behind, longhand: "Analogue... interference... lighthouse... 30 units..." and so on. What I perceived as dinky artwork is an "energetic living thing, remember", capable of transferring energy interdimensionally – an aid to visualisation by proxy. Once locked on to a signal of equal units of the energy stored within it, "it feeds this back to the Temple, and then back into humanity, right?" "Now let's imagine", continued Oram, not needing any visualisation aids, "that they discover

some kind of technology that we don't have now, and they find out how to make it, and by making it it's going to alter our history. I think the Damanhurians are working towards that, and that's what the Spheroself is about. It's about a new technology which looks completely odd. I mean, it looks pretty, etcetera, but it's a bit like stone-age man looking at a TV set". This evokes an image in my mind – what mind I had left – of the Victrolla dog, its head cocked, staring vacantly. Interestingly, this image manifested in Ananas's reaction to Oram's interpretation. Loch Ness was chosen merely because it is situated on a major energy line, she informed me.

Nevertheless, I am reminded of the writer John Fowles' observation of an object's ability to conquer time in the timeless world of the noosphere, "as immortal as an object in a cosmos without immortality can be". One example of this distinctly fortean concept of displaced artefacts is a discovery made in 1900 off the Aegean island of

## UNDERGROUND ALCHEMY



**HAPPY VALLEY:** The community of Damanhur (above left pictured in 1995) lives in the beautiful Valchiusella Valley (above right) led by Oberto Airaudi (below).

**I**n the Federation of Damanhur is a nation with its own social, political and economic structure, based on the application of both spiritual and aesthetic philosophy to daily life. Geographically, Damanhur is located in Valchiusella, a valley in the Italian Alps.

Damanhur's citizens – for it is a democratic community, not a cult – believe that individual spiritual evolution is only practical among like-minded people who share a commitment to self-improvement as well as to the general good of humankind and the planet.

It was founded in 1977 by several philosophers like Oberto Airaudi, who still lives and works there and is regarded by many citizens as an inspiration. Since then, Damanhur itself has passed through several different periods of political and social organisation. Today, the population of over 400 full-time citizens (and several hundred others peripherally) has a legal constitution, a federal government of elected members, a variety of councils, a justice system and even its own currency and calendar.

The centrepiece is undoubtedly the Temple of Mankind, a multi-level subterranean complex of seven chambers that extends into the Videraco mountain. The excavations began in 1978, since when it has been mined and decorated

largely by hand. The prospect of crafting a monument whose artistic merit could rival the masterpieces of antiquity has made it a focus for the community.

Each hall of the Temple is dedicated to a specific magical function and every element of its architecture and decoration has been imbued with meaning derived from ancient culture. It is "a three-dimensional book that can be read by those who hold the right knowledge, just like the Pyramids and the Gothic cathedrals."

The Damanhurians have not isolated themselves from the world about them. Tourists and visitors contribute to the valley economy; some of Damanhur's enterprises provide work for local people; and some citizens are actively engaged in local politics. Communal resources are invested in education and the arts and, for example, research into alternative energies.

The Federation owns woods, farms and over 70 buildings including private homes, laboratories, farms, schools, art and crafts studios and semi-industrial units.

Citizens can decide for themselves how they will work and contribute to the communal economy. On a voluntary basis, each citizen is encouraged to offer a few hours of work each month to take care of the common facilities such as the gardens, the theatre, the woods and, of course, the continuing creation of the Temple.

Valchiusella – "the closed valley" – is a special place with geological and spiritual properties, the Damanhurians believe, derived from a confluence of "three major synchronic lines". These "rivers of energy" surround the Earth and link it to the universe. The chambers and passages of the Temple, carved to follow the course of these lines, are regarded as a kind of "alchemical laboratory". Walking or meditating along these routes, say the Damanhurians, is a metaphor for "going deep inside oneself in a spiritual pilgrimage."

Damanhur is proud of its creation and welcomes visitors and those who wish to stay longer or perhaps even join them. There is a real-time experiment in finding a new way to live, work and play – one which is seriously observed by community planners. While its otherworldly scenes recall those in the computer game *Myst*, it is not unthinkable that we are looking at a model for the first human communities on some other planet.

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**CELEBRATION:** A festival at the Temple of Mankind.



FEDERATION OF DAMANHUR/ROBERTO DEGLI

#### ART ATTACK: The Temple's delicate Blue Gallery.

Antikythera. The bronze fragments, once it was realised how to assemble them 50 years later, turned out to be an astrolabe – an astronomical calculator. Dated to the 1st century BC, this earliest known mechanical computer is entirely anachronistic to our history of ancient Greece. The idea that it was introduced, out of time, out of place, by some distant Damanshurian, or even Airaudi himself, is certainly appealing.

As is, in this context, multiverse theory. Today, physicists and science fiction writers co-exist in a sea of speculation about separate universes of mirror matter and anti-particles. While some of these 'ghost-entities' are briefly observable under certain conditions, others exist only on paper. Oxford University theoretical physicist David Deutsch is one of a growing number of scientists who believe that the development of the quantum computer may provide a doorway to exploring the multiverse. Furthermore, he has applied this and other exotic concepts, such as the virtual reality generator, to the theoretical possibilities of time travel.

We catch up with Airaudi (with Campbell, Merrifield and Annas, acting as interpreter) on a visit to his home in Oxford. Deutsch ostensibly typifies the quintessential image of insouciant boffin, befitting his ascetic lifestyle. As Campbell tells it in his lectures on quantum mechanics, Deutsch rarely ventures beyond his own front door, and the route from his bed to his workspace is littered with academic papers and fast-food containers. It is easy to imagine that an Englishman's mess is much more alien to the suave Italian than anything he has previously experienced. At one point on

**TO Emerge WITH A COPY, YOU WOULDN'T HAVE TO PHYSICALLY MEET AND SHAKE HANDS...**

Merrifield's tape of the meeting, Airaudi asks for the bathroom. "It's through there", Deutsch indicates, "but you'll have to climb over a few things". As with Airaudi's, this image is misleading. Deutsch is keen to explain his ideas with refreshing clarity. Otherwise it is a meeting of philosophies so far removed they seem oddly similar – a facile similarity that spawns articles like "Quantum physicist meets the Dalai Lama". Truth has a converging power, muses Deutsch, sounding much like the latter, which we can see in one universe by strands of people agreeing, but it is actually just a small reflection of a convergence in the multiverse.

Otherwise it is not easy to separate unity from nicety. Deutsch is telling Airaudi about the Princeton philosopher David Lewis, who postulates that parallel universes must exist if only for purely philosophical reasons. "I think he's right", says Deutsch. "If we think seriously about it, the single universe world view doesn't make sense, for quite a number of reasons". Airaudi agrees. "It would not have width or density", he replies. "The effort would be wasted just to make only one". "Er, yeah", responds Deutsch, tentatively. "Something like that".

"In our philosophy", Airaudi elaborates, "we define this as events that separate like branches on a tree – there are many such branches, continually dividing". Accordingly, events that initiate societal change are eventually reintegrated into the trunk. Could all these connections lead to Damanshur? It would seem so. On hearing this, Deutsch suggests that perhaps it would have been more beneficial, to the Romans especially, to have introduced a keel rather than a rudder. "It's a good idea", agrees Airaudi, sagely. "Maybe next time".

Problems inevitably arise. One is that Airaudi's claim deprives our ancestors of their own creative evolution, not so much in accepting 'gifts from the gods' but of discovery. This God role is also hindered by the Chronological Protection Principle, which basically states that we cannot go back to affect the present or future. To Deutsch, however, multiverse theory solves

more problems than it creates; traditional rules need not necessarily apply, especially if they are based upon false assumption. With any number of universes available, we could simply travel back to the one in which we introduced that knowledge. The question then becomes whether it is possible to trade information between universes, much along the lines of Airaudi's analogy – the ultimate dream of quantum computer theorists. Scientist and mystic are getting along fine.

"These branches", asks Deutsch eventually. "Do you see them as actually existing or as mere possibilities?" It's a good question. Airaudi responds affirmatively. "They exist, of course. But there are some details which, if you are interested, I can illustrate to you..."

But the most intriguing aspect of this meeting is the apparent disparity in knowledge. Airaudi comes to it from a position of having witnessed many successful time experiments, while Deutsch's position is rooted in theory. The limitations of practical psychics, wide as they are and malleable as he sees them, places Deutsch at a disadvantage. His background is ultimately an obstacle to knowledge. It operates by the logic of

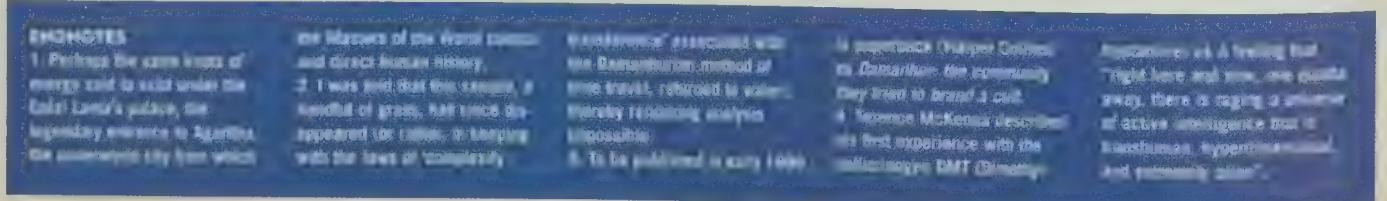
research and discovery, whereas the logic of knowledge needs no discovery because it knows already. Why must it demonstrate that which could not be otherwise? Deutsch can only imagine what might happen if we experiment along certain lines, but he understands that it can never be proved. His philosophy will not allow it. While the noosphere is equally created by great achievements in science, the important distinction between the artefact and the scientia is that the former, unlike the latter, can never be proved wrong. Airaudi, confident in his results, simply knows without having to question.

Throughout, Deutsch is the questioner. The notion of trade between universes forms a paradox he suggests, perhaps playfully, that Airaudi's timenauts could enact – an implicit challenge to provide evidence of their claims. The interaction of two separate instances of the same person travelling into the past, says Deutsch, would be enough to produce two copies of that person. The traveller could attempt to communicate with himself over two journeys, perhaps by way of a message left on the first trip and collected on the second. Much would depend upon the traveller's free will in choosing to act according to the outcome. Having effectively interacted with his earlier self, he could then decide not to travel back the first time, thus interrupting the loop. Mention of free will brings a nod from Airaudi.

"To emerge with a copy you wouldn't have to physically meet and shake hands", explains Deutsch. "You either go back or you don't, that's the subtlety". Alas, Airaudi argues, sensibly, that it is impossible to be in two places at the same time, the endless possibilities of the multiverse, branches and such, curiously AWOL.

When mystics embrace science, which is more likely? Will the mystic rise to the demands of science – that is strive to provide verifiable evidence – or will science become incorporated into myth? As much as the 'paranormal and such' is anathema to Deutsch (as he told me), it is nonetheless entertaining to consider his ideas in this context; perhaps all manner of ghostly entities, from Doppelgangers to UFOs, and even 'flashes of inspiration', are incarnate copies of some distant original?

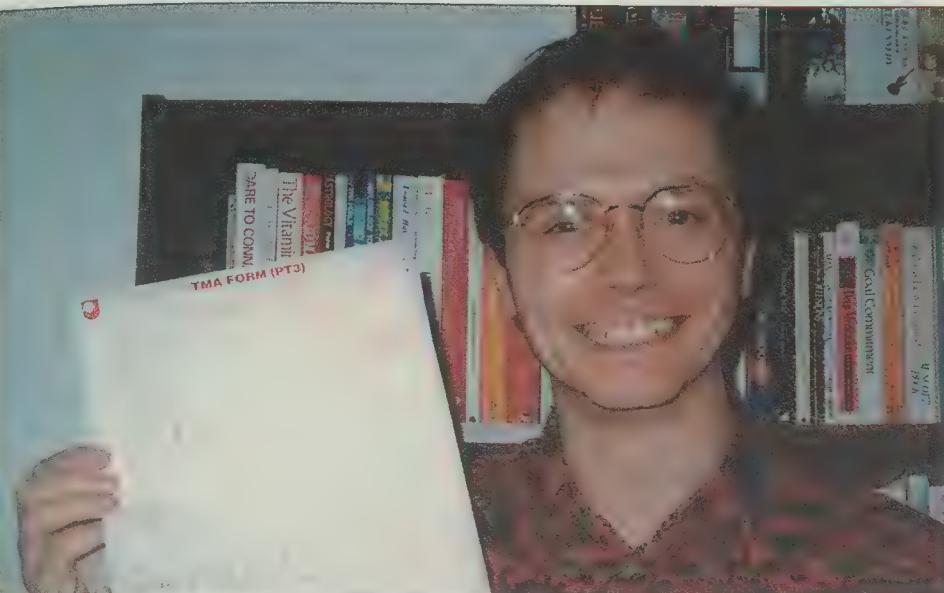
Like Deutsch (and Oram), the Damanshurians have escaped the idea of existence made up of a progression of closed experiences of irreversible change – the common perception of time. Theirs is dictated by the convention-busting tenet that life revolves around change. Action constitutes the secret – it's what got the Temple built – creating an environment in which they are free to conceptualise anything. Timenauts or psychonauts? 'Event-level' reality or shamanic lucidity<sup>4</sup>, perhaps induced by piezoelectricity emitted by the very walls of the Temple itself, or just pure fantasy? The creation of false phenomena at least raises questions, wrote Thomas Kuhn, such as 'What if?' and 'How do we know?' As Deutsch observes, every discovery of a new explanation, and every act of grasping an existing explanation, depends on the uniquely human faculty of creative thought. □



30 FTII6

# "I got 95% in a University essay – thanks to PhotoReading!"

A remarkable new technique is revolutionising studying. It enables anyone to mentally photograph the printed page at the rate of one page a second – writes Chris Payne.



Says Peter Barka: "I got 95% for an essay on Freud and 88% for one on Piaget – and it's all down to the PhotoReading home study course. All I did was PhotoRead the relevant chapters at the rate of one page a second – about 25,000 words per minute."

I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT," said Peter Barka, who lives in Surbiton. "I opened up the envelope containing my marks for two Open University essays I wrote, and got a real shock. My tutor had awarded me 95% for an essay on Freud and 88% for one on Piaget – and it's all down to the PhotoReading home study course.

"What amazed me was that I was only expecting 65-70%, which I usually get for my essays. I hadn't done any background reading – I didn't get round to it in time – or the expected 15 hours a week study time!

"Yet my tutor wrote in his report: 'In the Freud essay you analysed the relevant concepts with unusual depth and insight. Clearly a pass 1 (95%). A similar standard is maintained in the short notes questions. You have evidently gained a great deal of knowledge which will be of use throughout the course.'

#### "I was shocked at the result"

"All I did was PhotoRead the relevant chapters on Freud and Piaget at the rate of one page a second – about 25,000 words per minute. Then, when I Rapid Read the chapters, I noticed that the text seemed to have a tinge of familiarity to it. I also PhotoRead some essay/thesis-writing guides.

"When I sat down and wrote the essay I felt I knew something about the subject. But after I wrote the essay I thought 'Oh my god, I'll probably do worse than last time when I got 73%', especially as I'm very left brain, and the subject matter was more right brained. How wrong I was!"

"I almost felt a cheat, yet I went through every page of each book, and must have subconsciously absorbed the relevant parts to have accessed the information that quickly."

Peter was overjoyed on the day he got, for him, the unusually high marks: "I felt delirious, and I danced around like an idiot. I was just shocked at the result. I still feel quite shaky when I talk to my friends about the possibilities of PhotoReading."

#### "I'm absolutely bowled over!"

Hilke Legenhausen, 27, and based in East Grinstead, earns her living as a translator. She spent a couple of weeks learning to PhotoRead, and then PhotoRead her German-English dictionary twice.

"The dictionary has 1,600 pages, so I Photo-Read the whole of it in about half an hour. I got my personal proof that the system works when I

#### "PhotoReading is literally eye-opening"

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# STONED TOUCH

SOMETHING WAS THROWING ROCKS IN THE AUSTRALIAN OUTBACK -  
BUT WHAT? **TONY HEALY** AND **PAUL CROPPER** INVESTIGATE THE  
CHILLING CASE OF THE HUMPTY DOO POLTERGEIST

**A**lthough our story began as an ordinary yowie hunt, it soon turned decidedly weird. In December we taped a telephone interview with a woman who told of a close encounter with a screaming, stinking, 7ft (2m) tall orangutan-like creature on her mango farm near Acacia Gap in the Northern Territory. Although the farm was thousands of miles from the regions usually associated with reports of yowies (damnably elusive yeti-like apemen), she seemed a very good witness. So, when she phoned again in April to say the creature had returned, we decided to don our yowie-hunting hats and fly north.

No sooner had we made that decision than a striking instance of synchronicity occurred. At the time we were working on an article for *FT* about a couple of classic Australian stone-throwing poltergeist cases - see panels. We were up to our elbows in those weird old stories when we heard a Father Tom English speak on radio about levitating crucifixes and showers of stones which he had just witnessed in a house at Humpty Doo, Northern Territory (NT) - only 12.5 miles (20km) from the yowie site. Most fortuitous!

Once in the NT, we documented the yowie story as planned and collected a footprint cast, but the beast itself, as usual, remained elusive.



The polt, however, was much more accessible: for five days it obliged by showering us with pebbles, knives, bullets and anything else which came into its ectoplasmic grasp.

The haunting was focused on a four-bedroom house set on five acres just south of Humpty Doo and it began in late January 1998. By the time we arrived - on 26 April - it had become Australia's most-publicised poltergeist since the 'Guyra Ghost' of 1921 - see panel.

When Jill Summerville, her partner Dave Clarke and their mate Murph moved into the house in August 1997, they noticed nothing strange - but after a second couple, Andrew and Kirsty Agius, arrived with their 11-month-old toddler Jasmine, all hell broke loose.

During that monsoon season ('the Wet'), the area witnessed several of the loudest, wildest lightning displays anyone can remember. After one such rip-snorter, the group was sitting on their front veranda at dusk, when small pebbles began landing among them. Tiring of what they assumed was a mate's practical joke, they moved inside - only to have the pebbles follow them inside. In classic polt style, showers of half-inch (1.3cm) diameter stones - all, apparently, from their long gravel driveway - landed on floors, tables, beds and heads after apparently materialising just under the ceiling. Though the property was entirely saturated from the monsoon, all the pebbles that fell inside were bone dry. To their increasing dismay, knives, batteries, spanners, broken glass and other objects also began to drop or to hurtle across rooms.

To the occupants - very tough, hard-working young men and women - all this was weird but bearable; it was when messages began to appear on the walls and floor, that the group began to get a little nervous. The words were spelt out in scrabble tiles scrawled on walls or formed extremely neatly

MAIN IMAGE: ALIX HOWE; IMAGE MANIPULATION: ETIENNE GUILAIN

IN THE  
DAYS IT  
SHOWERED  
US WITH  
PEBBLES,  
KNIVES AND  
BULLETS



using scores of pebbles. The most upsetting aspect of the first series of words - "FIRE", "SKIN", "CAR", "HELP" and "TROY" - was that they clearly referred to their good mate

Troy, who had been incinerated in a road accident that January. A large cross and a trident - both made up of hundreds of pebbles - also appeared. Fairly freaked, they called the clergy.

When Father Tom English of Humpty Doo arrived on the scene, he was greeted by a pistol cartridge falling from nowhere to land at his feet and by a medicine bottle flying out of an empty room. Although inexperienced in such matters, he gamely blessed the place and doused it with holy water. The polt reacted in the time-honoured way: it went ape, smashing several windows, hurling Father Tom's crucifix and Bible around the house, banging and scraping on and inside walls and keeping the occupants awake and thoroughly spooked all night.

Two other priests tried to pop the polt. Father Stephen of Darwin's St Mary's Cathedral had seen several similar infestations in his native India. Even though a knife lifted off the microwave to fly straight at his chest, stopping "just short of hitting something" and falling at his feet, he was unfazed and continued to "bind" the spirit with prayer. A Greek Orthodox priest went the full Monty: setting up an altar on the kitchen table, blessing each room and reading arcane passages from a large black book. As the shell-shocked residents looked on, he was assaulted by an invisible force that repeatedly tried to wrench the book from his grasp and to twist his right arm behind his back. Ashen-faced, he finally sat down, declaring his adversary to be tougher than the average spook.

The local *Litchfield Times* was soon tipped off; its editor, Jack Ellis, and two reporters visited the house, observed a polt-peeling and in no time the story went ballistic. They soon signed a contract granting exclusive rights to the story for a week to Sydney's Channel 7. Although the promised \$5,000 would be most welcome, they signed mainly in the expectation of being protected from other media harassment and in the hope that video evidence would validate their story.

Although the entire TV crew quickly became fervent believers after dodging flying objects, they also became extremely



ROB: Paul Healy and his team from *9 News*

frustrated as the polt took to playing hide and seek with their cameras. Operators with hand-held cameras were invariably facing the wrong way as objects landed right next to them. With the house empty and locked, five continually-running fixed cameras recorded a whole lot of nothing until the battery-expired signals went off. Then, as the duty cameraman walked to the house with new batteries, his exasperated but amused mates, drinking on the patio, would hear a tattoo of whacks as objects careened around the interior. Messages - "NO CAMERAS", "NO TV" and "PIC CAMERA" - appeared on walls and floors to taunt them.

After 24-hour work days and great inconvenience to the residents, the crew managed to record only three objects in motion: a baby's bottle inexplicably falling from the top of a microwave, a pistol cartridge in the last foot or so of its fall, and a plastic lid flying from behind a cupboard.

Channel 7's *Today Tonight*, one of the country's least ethical tabloid-television shows, nevertheless used the story to great advantage, achieving very high ratings. Finally, to the horror of the hauntings - and to the dismay of their own cameramen - the programme's sceptical, city-based producers, having owned the story for a week, decided to scuttle it. Using a doctored video with misleading voiceovers, they attempted to prove they had caught Kirsty in the act of throwing an object. The polt story, they declared, was over... dead.

The polt, however, did not hear its own obituary: it continued its pesky pranks while the tenants, feeling used, abused and betrayed - and still awaiting the balance of their money - vowed to disembowel any other "fucking media vultures" who dared to darken their door.

At that auspicious moment Healy and Cropper arrived. We were received by two very tough-looking, unsmiling henchmen. Shaven-headed Andrew was guarded but polite; glowering, heavily-tattooed biker Murph didn't bother to hide his disdain for "youse media bastards".

Fortunately, we had with us our material on earlier Aussie polt cases. As they eagerly scanned it, finding many similarities to their own experience, and as they realised we were genuinely interested, they began to

lower the barriers. After Dave and Jill, both quiet and easy-going, and the more intense but friendly Kirsty arrived, we were invited to stay the night. Far from being a bunch of drunken layabouts, as some of the media tried to portray them, the residents struck us as being strong-minded, competent people. It was clear that above all else they simply wanted to be believed.

Well, it didn't take long to convince us. Nothing happened as we slept on the lounge room floor that night, except for a sudden staccato cry from a gecko - which resulted in Paul having to carefully peel Tony off the ceiling. But during the next five days, often with only Kirsty in the house, about 30 objects fell on or about us.

Usually, we heard a sharp whack as a missile hit, then caught sight of it as it ricocheted off a wall or settled on the floor. Most of the objects were familiar household items but some, like a yellow light bulb which fell beside us on the concrete patio - without breaking - had not been seen before. We gathered the material and stashed it in a drawer on the patio - only to have the items appear one by one, back inside the house. After some of the episodes, we found Dave and Jill's bedroom trashed, the mattress ajar and sometimes gravel strewn about.

On one occasion, Paul heard a rattling sound on the tin roof an instant before 13 pebbles landed on the kitchen floor beside him - having apparently teleported through both roof and ceiling. Stones later fell on his head and a skinning knife narrowly missed Tony's ear.

The more we saw, the more fury at the smug, ill-informed media. Two open, recently-made expressions to the press from their homes in Parramatta, Sydney, one said, "idiot seriously suggested that the group - with an 11-month old toddler in the house - had placed gravel, sharp knives and broken glass on top of their ceiling fans so the material would fly out in all directions at the flick of a switch."

Many of the incidents could - if one or more of the residents had been skilled conjurers - have been faked but several seemed almost unfakeable. Two incidents in particular were very convincing. A small crucifix left at the house by Father Tom became a frequent flyer: several times a day it would disappear from the mantelpiece and later

weather-board cottage just outside Guyra. Nobody could see who or what was creating the mayhem, but it was soon noticed that the attacks seemed to be focused on 12-year-old Minnie. Stones smashed through her bedroom window and fell on her bed.

Local residents - many of whom had observed the phenomena at the Bowens' - became quite jittery. Some took to sleeping with loaded guns at hand; one young girl was wounded in the head and several other people narrowly escaped being shot. The local police sergeant, who sat up night after night at the cottage amid the interminable thumps and showers of stones, broke under the strain and was sent away for a 'rest'.

Alarmed at the dangerous situation that was developing, the State government sent a team of detectives from Sydney. They maintained

# THE GUYRA GHOST

UNTIL THE 1998 HUMPTY DOO POLTERGEIST, AUSTRALIA'S MOST NOTORIOUS CASE WAS A VERY PERSISTENT, WALL-BASHING, STONE-THROWING POLT WHICH TERRORISED WILLIAM BOWEN, HIS WIFE AND THREE CHILDREN NEAR GUYRA, NEW SOUTH WALES.



HUMPTY DOO: The Bowen home caused some strange visitors in 1921

## INVISIBLE TRIED TO TAKE THE BOOK FROM HIM

he Bowen's nightmare began - on about 8 April 1921 - with "tremendous thumping" on the walls followed by showers of stones which eventually broke every window in the tiny

weather-board cottage just outside Guyra. Nobody could see who or what was creating the mayhem, but it was soon noticed that the attacks seemed to be focused on 12-year-old Minnie. Stones smashed through her bedroom window and fell on her bed.

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Given full access to the house, he removed portions of the roof to create lookout posts and set an elaborate system of traps.

Completely unimpressed, the 'ghost' continued its maddening mayhem. Moors and his five assistants were completely flummoxed; they couldn't even say for sure whether the walnut-sized stones were thrown from inside or outside the house. But where the foreign expert failed, a local ghost-buster may have partially succeeded.



GUYRA: The Bowen family

enough to dislodge ornaments on a sideboard. When a 200lb (91kg) man threw his full weight against the wall next to the sideboard, the ornaments did not even shake. After a time, Minnie's parents brought her back to the Guyra cottage. Thereafter, it seems, the strange phenomena simply faded away.

Nowadays, it is hard to find any resident of Guyra who knows much about the story that pushed the

little town into the limelight so many years ago. The two houses involved in the mystery still stand, although the Bowen residence has been enlarged and renovated. The current occupants, though a little nervous when they moved in, have never heard a peep out of the 'ghost'.

Twelve-year-old Minnie appears to have been a typical "poltergeist medium" - the kind of troubled adolescent who very often seems to be the focus and possibly the unconscious instigator of some polt attacks. A *Sunday Times* journalist considered her a rather odd little girl: "Minnie is tall, thin and dark, with peculiar dark, introspective eyes that never seem to miss any movement in a room. When she speaks to you she never smiles and seems to look beyond or through you... she has a rather uncanny aptitude for anticipating questions, almost before they are asked."

Minnie Bowen grew up, married and, as Mrs Inks, lived for many years, apparently normally, in Armidale. If she knew more about the 'Guyra Ghost', there is no record of her telling anyone about it in later life. In about 1988 or '89, the elderly, slow-moving lady was run over and killed, just outside Armidale.

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PAUL HEALY: A member of the *9 News* team in the office of the *9 News*



PAGE LEFT: A member of the *9 News* team in the office of the *9 News*



PAGE LEFT: A member of the *9 News* team in the office of the *9 News*

crash into a wall somewhere. When it landed on the rear patio beside Paul – with the only other people 9ft (2.7m) away and plainly in sight – he became a near-total believer. When Tony saw a little brass plug fall vertically onto a table between himself and Kirsty (who was holding a newspaper with both hands while reading a polt story aloud), he too had to admit that a hoax was almost out of the question.

It would be natural for sceptics to question the judgement of people like us – who chase yowies and bunyips and who, like Agent Mulder, obviously want to believe – so we hasten to mention that all six deeply sceptical journalists we met who visited the house (including *Northern Territory News* reporter

Nikki Voss and her cameraman, and Tracey Farrar (right) of ABC radio,

Darwin) also came away firm polt believers. Both Tracey and Nikki were plagued by bad dreams for several nights afterwards.

Like us, the journalists could not see how all of the phenomena could have been faked or why the group would do it. A hoaxing individual or clique within the group would have risked "murder" by the others if discovered. We don't believe hoaxes were at work but, if they were, they were not only first-rate conjurers, but first-class actors as well.

The origin of the Humpty Doo polt is unclear. Stavros Kanaris, who built the house

in 1972 and lived there happily for 20 years, thinks the polt is a result of his family's anger at being evicted after his business failed: "The bank took my blood... 30 years of hard work."

The family still dreams of returning.

Every night I'm there in my dreams.

My wife is always there too. It was our life."

As she was forced from their home on the last day, Maria Kanaris did not curse the house. She did, however, put a heartfelt curse on the bank. (Although moved by the story, it occurred to us that if a polt appeared every time someone cursed a bank, then every home would have one!)

## a STONE'S THROW

EVEN MORE REMARKABLE THAN THE 'GUYRA GHOST' IS A WESTERN AUSTRALIAN POLTERGEIST THAT BEGAN ITS ACTIVITIES IN 1955 AND WHICH IS STILL IN BUSINESS 43 YEARS LATER.



LOWDOWN: Stones by Aborigines descended on the shack and its occupants.

many were, despite the chilly weather, quite hot to the touch – Bill Hack was convinced no human prankster was involved. Several stones actually fell indoors, after apparently materialising just under the ceiling.

One evening there occurred something rare in polt cases: Mrs Hack observed a small, round light, floating about five feet (1.5m) above the ground. It moved smoothly downhill, towards the polt-plagued shack.

When Aboriginal 'clever man' Sammy Miller was consulted, he suggested the disturbance was being caused by the spirit of Jean Smith's father, Alf Eade, who lay seriously ill in hospital after suffering a heart attack on Hack's property.

If Eade either died or recovered,

Miller declared, the disturbance would cease. Be that as it may, after eight days the stone-falls did ease off and everyone at Mayanup breathed a collective sigh of relief.

Two years later, however, stones pelted down again, this time on the farm of Alan Donaldson in Pumphrey. The focus of the activity this time was another Aboriginal, Cyril Penny, who, interestingly, had been at Mayanup during the previous

years. Jean and their seven children. Stones up to the size of hens' eggs fell for eight nights and were observed by 30 of Hack's neighbours. They set up a cordon around the house in a fruitless effort to catch the stone-thrower. They even ploughed a wide "ghost-break" around the shack but never discovered a single footprint on it.

Because most of the stones seemed to move through the air unnaturally slowly – and because

ous haunting. It was almost as if the polt had followed him 87 miles (140km) to Pumphrey.

At Pumphrey, crowds of up to 70 people witnessed stones falling day and night for six days, mainly on shacks occupied by two Aboriginal families but also on the main homestead. The stones ranged in size from tiny pebbles to 11lb (5kg) rocks and falls usually occurred every 20 minutes or so and lasted for about two minutes. Although people were hit, none was even slightly hurt. The Donaldsons said the stones appeared to float down, hitting the ground with a dull thump. Very few rolled on impact.

Young Harvey remained remarkably cool to this mastodon of weirdness. Even after being showered with stones – while sitting in a car with all the windows up – he insisted he "couldn't care less" about it. "I don't mind where it finishes," he said. "I don't worry."

Even today, after having lived with the pesky polt for over 40 years, Harvey is still amazingly laid back. He recently told us that 'Uncle Bobby' – as his family call the polt – has changed a lot over the years.

While objects still move around, recent phenomena have included the sound of phantom cars arriving outside the house, including crunching gravel and doors slamming.

Footsteps are heard in corridors, fires (in fireplaces) light themselves and – wouldn't this freak you out? – an invisible person (a very heavy invisible person) once sat on the end of Harvey's bed in the middle of the night. An apparition of a woman in 1940s era clothes has also been seen.

There is a sign at the gate saying 'Haunted Farm' but the poltergeist buffs who drop in from time to time find Harvey and his brood as unworried as ever. It seems footloose, freewheeling 'Uncle Bobby' has settled down and is just one of the family now.

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BACK ON THE FARM AND FAMILY.

## GHOSTLY MISSILES

We go back even earlier – to the *Broughton Creek Register* of 5 March 1887 – for a straightforward account of a rock-throwing polt that persecuted a woman in her home.



**S**ome days ago, a farmer [Mr Large] residing in the vicinity of Cooyal reported to the police that for several nights [his family] had been terrified [by] stones, some of which weighed 11/2lbs [312g], continually dropping inside the house, apparently coming through the roof. Strange to say, these extraordinary occurrences are never apparent unless the man's wife is in the room.

The affair has created quite a sensation and all who have visited the place seeing for themselves, the police included, persist in applying the evidently appropriate term 'ghostly missiles' to the huge 'gibbers' which have dropped in the house when the doors and windows have been secured.

The effect on the poor woman, who feels that she is the victim of an awful vengeance, is most alarming. At times, while the missiles are

Kirsty at home alone noticed two very dark 'bush Aborigines' digging a hole next to the house, which is 230ft (70m) from the road. When challenged they walked silently away. Leaves had been cleared in a 6ft x 2ft (1.8m x 0.6m) (grave-size?) patch around the foot-deep hole. After that mysterious visit, all polt activity ceased for four days – the longest break they'd had.

Despite all the references to his terrible death, the residents strongly rejected the notion that their mate Trouy was haunting them. Having noticed that the polt attempted to play on their fears and concerns – after apparently listening to their conversations – the group threw a challenge right back in its ectoplasmic face. Walking through the house, they shouted such non-Vatican-approved invocations as "You're not Trouy, you piss-weak bastard. Why don't you just FUCK OFF!"

Thereafter, all references to Trouy ceased and the residents, though never relishing it, slowly became used to living with the polt and at times even deliberately provoked it into tantrums. Andrew successfully stirred it up for us a couple of times by reading out psalms from Father Tom's Bible.

We admired the group for the way they refused to be driven from the house that, with its spacious grounds, large garage and

two years earlier – staying in Bachelor, NT – they'd had stones thrown with great power and accuracy through their front door. Although they assumed their assailants were black teenagers reacting to Andrew's concealed anti-Aboriginal views, they never so much as glimpsed them. Later, when he and Kirsty worked at a construction camp, coffee cups and other objects went missing in odd circumstances. Everyone seemed to agree that the Great Humpty Doo Weirdness began only when they moved in.

Having been told that Aboriginal 'clever men' or sorcerers have sometimes plagued their enemies with showers of stones, we wondered if Andrew and Kirsty had been cursed in that manner. An incident which occurred a few days before we arrived seemed to hint that such was the case.



WORLD VIEWER: VARIOUS TAKES ON THE HAUNTING OF HUMPTY DOO

It is an easy matter to convince superstitious people of these facts but when sceptics go and see, and sit with the woman and her husband in the same room and have stones dropping round about them, they are very glad to be rid of such unpleasant associations. This was the case when Mr Parker and others went out, at the solicitation of Large.

Another instance. A large-sized stone, which fell in the ordinary way, struck a little child on the side of the face [and] left no mark, nor did the child appear to take any notice of the blow. At the time, Mr Parker was sitting in the house, [friends who had accompanied him] were stationed outside to see that no person was on the roof. The house is without ceiling, so that no person can be secreted inside. We understand that Large has determined to remove his family from that place.

pool-side bar suited them perfectly.

Finally, however, in early May, after surviving the onslaught of the polt, the scrutiny of the nation and a curious, unjustified eviction attempt from their landlord, they walked away on their own terms, leaving the house – and hopefully the polt behind them.

The Humpty Doo case seemed to have almost everything we have come to expect from a major polt outbreak: showers of stones; dangerous objects thrown with great force but without causing injury; other objects falling unnaturally – slowly yet producing unnaturally loud sounds on impact; rappings and scratchings; violent reactions to prayers and religious paraphernalia; threatening messages; mind games; resistance to exorcism; ill-informed pronouncements by sceptics and half-arsed

contrived expose of supposed hoaxing. But a couple of things observed at Humpty Doo have, we believe, not been recorded elsewhere.

After a wild night in February, which left a thick covering of pebbles on their car roofs and outdoor bar, the residents noticed long shallow troughs in their gravel driveway – as though the pebbles had been vacuumed up in their thousands. Shortly afterwards, Brett Styles, a mate of Murph's, may have caught a unique glimpse of a polt 'reloading'. One evening, he observed a strange object flying from the driveway, under the patio roof and away at tremendous speed. It appeared to be spherical, jet-black and smaller than fist-size. It had a two-foot (0.6m) long stream of gravel behind it. Freaky.

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# THE LYING, THE WITCH AND THE WAR PROBE

HELEN DUNCAN IS INFAMOUS AS THE LAST WOMAN IN BRITAIN TO BE TRIED AS A WITCH. WITH HIS EYE FOR CURIOUS CASE LAW, ANDREW DENNIS DISCOVERS THAT THIS IS ONLY ONE OF THE MYTHS PERPETUATED BY HER CAMPAIGNERS.

**T**he famous and infamous are fated to be, after their deaths, other than they were in life. Sometimes canonisation follows, with conspiracy theories to serve as the demonology of the new cult. Diana and Kennedy are the classic examples. Others rest easy a while, and are then appropriated, by fair means or foul, to some cause.

One such is Helen Duncan, a British medium (or at least a purported medium) who, at the close of World War II, was practising in Portsmouth as a physical or materialisation medium – one who produces ectoplasm or other physical effects during séances. Following séances she gave that January 1944, she was arrested and initially charged with offences against the Vagrancy Act, then the statute of choice for the prosecution of frauds in the fields we now know as paranormal; palmists, crystal gazers, astrologers and the like.<sup>1</sup> Shortly thereafter, the charges were increased. She, with two co-accused, was charged under the Witchcraft Act 1735 with pretending to raise spirits, and also with obtaining money under false pretences and went for trial at the Central Criminal Court in April 1944.<sup>2</sup>

In itself, this was nothing unusual. It is the fate of occult practitioners to fall foul of the law. The field is ripe for fraud, and there are always those willing to reap a harvest of fools. It is impossible to say, at this remove of time, whether Helen Duncan was one such fraud, beyond remarking that the Old Bailey (wartime) jury thought she was, notwithstanding the evidence of more than 40 witnesses to the contrary – and that a peacetime jury in 1933 had also convicted her of a fraud.

What is odd about the Duncan case is the way in which it has subsequently been used: an application has been made to the Home Secretary to have her posthumously pardoned of her 1944 conviction under the Witchcraft Act 1735. This raises a number of interesting questions, not least the relationship between the afterlife and national security. It is alleged by those supporting Mrs



MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

**THE MAIN  
WITNESS  
SAID THAT  
HE HAD  
HEARD  
FROM HIS  
AUNT WHO  
WAS NOT IN  
FACT DEAD**

Duncan that her arrest, trial and nine-month stay in Holloway had nothing to do with the allegation that her séances of 14 and 19 January 1944 were inept shams. (The prosecution's main witness said at trial that he heard from his aunt, who was not in fact dead at the time).

Duncan's trade was undoubtedly helped by the war; interest in the supernatural tends to rise as families become concerned over the fate of their loved ones. There's more to it than that, of course. One of the stories about Duncan is that, at one of her séances, a sailor manifested and told those assembled that his ship had sunk. Stories of this séance vary. Some versions have it that the sailor's mother was present and went to the Admiralty demanding to know why she had not been told of her son's death. Other versions have it that the then editor of *Psychic News* heard and called the Admiralty. However the authorities got to hear, her séances came to the attention of the Portsmouth police shortly thereafter.

A better documented case is the one recounted by Brigadier R C Firebrace, a paranormal enthusiast, who was later to publish several works on astrology. He records that he was present at a séance, in May 1941 in Edinburgh, at which Duncan's spirit guide passed on the news that a British ship had sunk. Firebrace was to learn shortly thereafter that the Hood had sunk with a loss of over 1,100 lives. There is much that is troubling about both the Hood and the Barham accounts; neither is wholly reliable as evidence of psychic talent (see box on page 43).

Then there's the connection between the prosecution's star witness and the police. His uncle was a senior officer at Scotland Yard and he had social contacts in the upper echelons of the Portsmouth police. These matters were not raised at the trial, but

have been since. He denies that he was in any way prompted to visit the first Duncan séance he attended and went to the police about it of his own volition. On such connections, however, are conspiracy theories built.

Duncan denied all the charges against her and, at the close of her trial with a guilty verdict, denounced the case against her as lies. This, as evidence, is worthless on either side of the scale. If protestations of innocence were anything to go by, the world's jails are largely populated by miscarriages of justice, and to accept a denial as evidence of guilt is to turn logic on its head. Despite the conviction, therefore, the question of her status as either fraud or medium remains open.

The prime debunker of Helen Duncan's mediumship was the famous 'ghost-hunter' Harry Price. Amid a great deal of instrumentation and camerawork, he came to the conclusion that she was a fraud. He was not alone in that – several sitters at her séances, investigating officers and a jury of her peers thought the same – but he did contrive to eliminate most of the obvious means whereby the tricks could have been done.

What he hit on was his regurgitation theory; Duncan was swallowing the cloth used to fake the ectoplasm and bringing it back later as required. That certainly accounts for the fact that the stuff was never found in the course of pre-séance examinations – for which Duncan insisted on being naked. She also smelt odd. This theory also gives the debunkers of the spiritualist world the opportunity to have a go at Price. He decided that Duncan must have a prodigious stomach capacity and left it more or less at that.

The debunkers would have it that in fact X-ray photographs of Duncan showed that she had a smaller stomach than normal, and that the "regurgitation act" explanation falls at that hurdle. That, alas, doesn't settle the matter: soft-tissue X-rays are notoriously unclear (hence the use of barium meal and the like). Whatever the size of her stomach at the time of the X-ray, the capacity of the human stomach to expand is quite prodigious.

**A GHOST OF A CHANCE:** Reputed psychical investigator Harry Price (left) found Helen Duncan to be a fraud. He was unimpressed by her materialisations of ectoplasm (right), finding it to be a cheesecloth-like substance.



ALL PICTURES: HARRY PRICE/MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY



HARRY PRICE COLLECTION/UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

FOR THE VEST: This vest, an exhibit in the case, was said to be materialised by Duncan as her spirit guide, Peggy.

**O**n top of that, there is a long and honourable (if slightly nauseating) history of regurgitation acts, mostly in the carnal freak-shows of the US grindshow circuit. To this day, the likes of Stevie Starr make their living by swallowing and bringing up a revolting assortment of objects.<sup>3</sup> The cases for and against Duncan on this score are not proven, with the balance of plausibility in favour of her being a fraud.

During Duncan's trial (at which several military personnel including an RAF Wing Commander gave evidence for the defence), the media of the time kept a close watch on the evidence. The case was a welcome distraction from the privations of wartime. Word of it reached Churchill, who sent a sharp memo demanding to know about this "obsolete tomfoolery". That memo can be read at least two ways. Was Churchill concerned at the prosecution of a spiritualist as such and motivated by sympathy? On the other hand, he could simply have been concerned that the law-enforcement resources of a country preparing to open a second front against the enemy were being deployed on a case that, to many, would seem wasteful.

Whatever the true position, it is suggested by Duncan's supporters that she was tried as a witch under obsolete legislation in order to get her locked up before she gave away the date of the D-Day invasion, or did something else to compromise national security. There is much that is troubling about this suggestion, not least that it depends on several palpably false assumptions.

First, that Duncan was tried as a witch. She was not; she was, as the prosecution evidence and the judgement of the Court of Criminal Appeal makes clear, tried and convicted as a fraud.

Second, the plot as conjectured presupposes that the "authorities" thought that she was a genuine threat to national security. If they had, there were



CORBIS

powers available to them under which Duncan could have been interned without trial or, if habeas corpus was a problem, charges brought of her breaching wartime security regulations. If nothing else, the Official Secrets Act of the day was far more draconian than the present one and a conviction could have been had for the asking. Third, the plot only makes sense if Duncan herself had been singled out for special victimisation under a Witchcraft Act which was a dead letter.

The Witchcraft Act was in occasional use for the more unpleasant spiritualist frauds (as the police perceived them) right up until the repeal of the Act and its replacement with the far more unambiguous Fraudulent Mediums Act of 1951. The last prosecution under the Witchcraft Act was in 1950 – of one Botham<sup>4</sup> – and there was another trial under the same Act in September 1944 in the same courtroom – of 73-year-old Jane Yorke. Practice with the Act was to reserve it for cases where summary conviction would not be enough (on the facts of the case) or where

the publicity of an indictment was desired in the interests of deterrence. The Chief Constable of Portsmouth had last used the Act in January 1939 to convict a Gosport woman named Birch of a fraud involving spell-magic.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, there is the suggestion that the authorities feared that Duncan would give the game away regarding D-Day. In fact, practically everyone in the country knew that the second front must open soon; US troops had been arriving for months, North Africa had been capped by the battle of El Alamein and the invasion of Italy was well under way.

The date was not certain even at the highest levels; it depended on the weather, tides, the state of preparations and a myriad of other factors and was not, in fact, settled until two days before the first ships sailed. The only way Duncan could have found out about D-Day in any event, had the security service followed this logic, was from one of those who died in the first wave ashore, by which time the Germans would have been quite clear on the subject anyway.

All things considered, there is enough internal dissonance in the case for a conspiracy against Duncan and her accomplices that I cannot find a case to answer, let alone enough evidence to make my mind up one way or another. There is certainly enough to say that a large number of people thought Helen Duncan a fraud, including several who attended her séances.

**T**hus is the BSPS effort condemned by Helen Dunn, who is Helen Duncan's present channel.<sup>6</sup> She, in her website, points out the distinction between Duncan's activities as a medium and her connections with spiritualism as a movement; according to Dunn, they were shaky at best and occasionally hostile. Dunn appears to be looking to vindicate mediumship in general rather than spiritualism in particular, and claims to have made her presence felt in a number of governmental quarters.

There are two other, more minor efforts; that of Duncan's granddaughter Margaret Parrington, who has got no further than giving an interview to Channel 4's *Secret History* series and asking for help in a web-based psychic phenomena forum<sup>10</sup>. One of the replies she got was from the daughter of

Dion Fortune famously claimed that there was an occult battle raging over Europe at the same time as tanks and aircraft duked it out to settle the Second World War in the mundane sphere.

The connection works the other way as well. Figures known to have been involved in the intelligence and counterintelligence professions frequently attract rumours of devilry. Dennis Wheatley, who was certainly involved in the intelligence effort during World War II, was also interested in the occult. He wrote a number of otherwise tedious novels combining the two sets of experiences and it is frequently suggested that they are somewhat autobiographical.

On the other side, there is no shortage of claims that the Nazis had an occult dimension. Although, in *Occult Roots of Nazism* (I B Tauris, 1992) Goodrick-Clarke denies that occultism was overt in the Nazi Party, a number have come to the opposite conclusion and constructed conspiracy theories that approach the condition of Art.<sup>6</sup>

Given the hint at an intelligence dimension in the Duncan story, campaigners are now suggesting that it is the only important factor in her conviction and that, accordingly, the conviction should be quashed. In fact, I have strong doubts about all of the evidence advanced by all of the campaigning groups: the extent of the disagreements between them on fairly fundamental points and the fact that evidence of Duncan's activities comes almost exclusively from people with strong prejudices in favour of belief. However, it remains worth looking at those now seeking to co-opt Duncan to their causes.

The best-organised is the effort of the British Society of Paranormal Studies<sup>7</sup>, which has a fighting fund to which contributions of money and the services of lawyers<sup>8</sup> (those starting in practice or retired, ie. free) are invited. They are looking forward to eventually bringing a court action (of type unspecified) to further their aim of clearing Duncan's name. They have a number of links with the Noah's Ark Society for Physical Mediumship, an organisation dedicated to furthering the work of physical mediumship, and the Anglo-American Spiritualist Ministries. The agenda, reading between the lines, seems to be publicity for what they do and thereby a resurgence in the practice of spiritualism.

# HOW IMPRESSIVE WERE DUNCAN'S PREDICTIONS?

**T**here are two to consider, concerning the ships *HMS Hood* and *HMS Barham*. In neither case does the prediction seem terribly impressive. Of the *Hood*, we know that the prediction was made before Firebrace's Admiralty sources knew she had gone down. He did not know the ship was the *Hood* until his contact told him. This happened in late May 1941 (*HMS Hood* sank following an engagement with the *Bismarck* on 24 May) at the height of the Battle of the Atlantic.

In those circumstances, the statement that "a battleship has been sunk" is dismal evidence of clairvoyance or mediumship. Men were dying in their thousands in the Atlantic at the hands of the U-boats – there were 35 at sea at any one time. The sinking of the *Hood* was quite fortuitous. However, on several occasions, news of several other sinkings of warships (from the corvette class on up) was known despite the lack of announcement through official channels in the UK. No doubt some had been loudly trumpeted on German propaganda radio; had Duncan been more specific there would be a lot less trouble with this prediction.

The sinking of the *Barham* (pictured right) is more problematic. There are several accounts of this séance and the dates given vary. *HMS Barham* sank at 4:30pm, local time, just north of Sollum in the eastern Mediterranean on 25 November 1941. The date that makes most sense of the conspiracy allegation – late 1943 – makes a nonsense of the notion that Duncan found out about it through paranormal means.



torpedoed. As it happened, of *Barham's* complement (rated at 1,169, although under wartime conditions she probably did not have that exact number) about 270 died. That left about 800–900 men surviving to tell the tale.

So, although it might seem, at first, that there was no way a medium in Portsmouth could know of the fate of a ship at sea, she was in exactly the right town to hear about it. We know that the *Barham* was accompanied and seen to sink; one of the accompanying vessels was able to take photographs. All it would take is one sailor, returning on leave or for reassignment, to come to Portsmouth (one of the main centres of British

naval operations for several hundred years) and the word would be out. As it was, there were at least 3,000, probably nearer 4,000 candidates for that sailor's role in all this. Or, more likely, the news of the *Barham's* demise would have come in coded radio traffic to Portsmouth and been leaked from there, possibly to a relative of one of her complement.

The séance is also placed at the time of the *Barham's* sinking, in November 1941. If that is true – and there is plenty of evidence either way; certainly the first suggestion I saw of it was the Channel 4 docu-drama – then the matter is less in doubt. Of course, then we have to ask whether the account of her clairvoyance of the *Barham per se* is accurate; did the worried mother come seeking to get in touch with a son who had stopped writing home every week? Was it another case of Duncan bringing forth a "dead sailor" only to have a distraught member of the audience make the vital connection? Another odd detail is occasionally mentioned. The "dead sailor" is supposed to have appeared wearing his *HMS Barham* halibut, but such hatsbands are not worn in wartime for security purposes.

This is something that can never be properly answered. Those who go to séances go, by and large, because they want to believe, and there is plenty of evidence for altered perception of quite facile frauds in such circumstances. Those who go with the intent of mocking, or being sceptical are of doubtful use as witnesses for much the same reason: there are sceptics who will see fraud in anything.

wrong with it, but it retains currency in polemic to this day. Similarly, the confessions of "witches" may be as useful evidence of medieval *maleficium* as the confessions of the Birmingham Six were of IRA operating procedure, but that did not stop Margaret Murray and a host of imitators from drawing startling conclusions from them.

As a fortean, of course, I refuse to adopt any particular opinion but as a betting man I will offer this:

November 1998 is the centenary of Duncan's birth.

The coming years will see the myth grown to very much more impressive proportions. ☺

MERIA WAR MUSEUM

Duncan had been shot for spying, and several others believed that she had been convicted of actual witchcraft.

No doubt the struggle will go on.

In time, I suspect that Duncan's case will turn into something capable of application in favour of paranormalist groups, her dubious paranormal credentials notwithstanding.

Something similar happened to the victims of the European witch hysteria of the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries; Gage's assertion that nine million were executed in 300 years may have a number of serious things



Rauschning's Hitler Speaks, or, for an overview, Bullock's Hitler: A Study in Tyranny (1990, Penguin Books).

7. members.tripod.com/~helenduncan

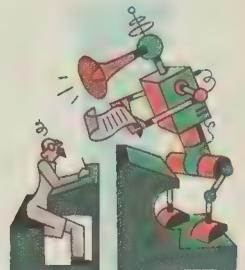
8. I'm sorely tempted.

9. www.surtonair.co.uk/duncerline-duncanduncan-mchale

10. www.sists.ie/zak/forum/messages

11. www.ozemail.com.au/~vwzammi

- NOTES
1. In his book *Misleading Cases*, the MP scholar and occasional humorist A P Herbert pokes fun at the Vagrancy Act and its prohibition of fortune-telling in a fictitious account of the trial of several newspaper racing tipsters. It is a long way from being among his funniest work, but illustrates the inadequacies of the old law rather neatly.
  2. A short account of the trial and its subsequent appeal appears in FT103.
  3. Including, in Starr's case, live goldfish for which he has been censured by animal welfare groups. Even I am amazed at some of the things I have paid good money to see.
  4. See FT104.
  5. In fact, practice had become so inconsistent across police jurisdictional boundaries



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## LOST ARK

# A SCALY TALE FROM RINTJA

In 1912 Komodo startled naturalists with the discovery of its giant monitor lizard. A similar surprise may come from neighbouring island Rintja's lizard king as KARL SHUKER reveals.

**S**andwiched between the large island of Flores to the east and the much smaller island of Komodo to the west, within Indonesia's Lesser Sundas, is the even smaller island of Rintja (Rindja). Komodo's fame in cryptozoological circles is due, of course, to its giant monitor lizard, the Komodo dragon *Varanus komodoensis*, which remained undescribed by science until as recently as 1912, despite the fact that it is the world's largest living species of lizard. However, Komodo's glory may yet be overshadowed by its smaller neighbour, Rintja, thanks to reports of an extraordinary cryptid said to frequent this diminutive dot of land.

In 1963, French traveller Pierre Pfeiffer's book *Bivouacs à Borneo* included details of a visit to Rintja, and, as I recently discovered, while hunting there one night with an old native hunter he was informed about a very interesting mystery beast. The island's inhabitants greatly fear this creature, which they refer to as the veo. According to the hunter, the veo is as big as a horse, has a long head, and fur on its belly, but its flanks are covered in scales, and its feet are equipped with very large claws. During the day it stays in the mountains, but at night it descends to the mangrove coasts, where it feeds upon crabs and shellfish. Sometimes its distinctive cry can be heard during the evening, sounding like 'hoo-hoo-hoo'.

In the light of the above description, it should come as no surprise that the hunter vehemently dismissed Pfeiffer's suggestion that the veo might simply be a dugong (sea-cow)! Moreover, he stated that he had actually seen a veo once, while hunting at night at a locality on Rintja called Loho Buaji, in the company of a native policeman from Labuanbadja on Flores. When they encountered the veo, they were so frightened that they fell to the ground at once, and lay there watching it but without moving until the creature disappeared. In reply, Pfeiffer claimed that if he were ever to meet a veo, he would simply shoot it, but the hunter assured him that this would make no difference, as the veo's scaly skin protected it from bullets.

Pfeiffer concluded that the veo tradition probably stemmed from distant, distorted memories of the armoured horses ridden by the first Portuguese explorers to visit this island, some five centuries earlier – but not everyone agrees with him.

About a couple of years ago, Dr J Zahrádka, a physician from Teplice in the Czech Republic, came upon a Czech translation of Pfeiffer's book, and sent a copy of the chapter documenting the veo to Dr Jaroslav Mares, one of his country's leading cryptozoologists. Mares was extremely interested by the information – so much so that he wrote to an Indonesian friend called Uning, from Jakarta, Java, requesting any additional details that he might be able to supply, because he knew that Uning had spent some time on Rintja.

Sure enough, while there Uning had indeed learnt of the veo, and after closely

questioning the native people he had been able to prepare a very detailed, precise description of the veo, which is as follows. Measuring at least 10ft (3m) in total length, the veo has a long head, and much of its body is covered in very large scales that overlap one another like roofing tiles. On its head, throat, belly, the inner side of its limbs, and the end of its tail, however, it has hair. Its feet bear long claws, and if disturbed it can be very dangerous, sitting up vertically on its hind legs and slashing at its antagonist with the huge razor-sharp claws on its front paws. Its diet consists primarily of termites and ants, but it will also eat crustaceans and other small sea creatures left stranded upon the beach by the outgoing tide.

When Dr Mares first received this report from Uning, he assumed that the veo was one and the same as the Komodo dragon. Despite its name, this mighty lizard is not confined entirely to Komodo; it is known to exist on Rintja too, as well as on Flores and Padar, and may also exist on Sumbaya, though this has yet to be confirmed. However, when Mares suggested this identity, Uning replied that the Rintja natives are familiar with the Komodo dragon, and readily distinguish it from the veo.

This is not surprising, because Uning's description is tantalisingly reminiscent of an extremely distinctive type of creature very different from any lizard. The veo's impressive body armour of large overlapping scales, its lengthy head, the large sharp claws on its feet, and the presence of hair rather than scales on its underparts and inner limbs – these are all morphological characteristics of those 'living pine-cone' mammals known as pangolins or scaly anteaters, native to Africa and Asia. So too is the veo's dietary preference for ants and termites. As for its behaviour: some pangolins are indeed predominantly nocturnal, but they are also primarily timid beasts that prefer to roll up into a ball, rather than attack, when threatened. However, one could readily imagine that a pangolin as big as the veo might not be quite so timid, and hence may be more liable to confront an enemy in the daunting manner described by the Rintja natives. In addition, pangolins can run with their front limbs raised completely off the ground, and when walking they will often pause periodically and raise themselves up like scaly kangaroos, squatting vertically on their hind legs, and supported by their long tail – as described for the veo.

Nevertheless, considerations of size also expose a major inconsistency between the veo and a pangolin identity for it, because none of today's known species of pangolin is anywhere near as large as the veo. Even the biggest, the giant pangolin *Manis (Phataginus) gigantea* of Africa, does not usually exceed 5ft (1.5m) in total length. Of course, estimates of the veo's size could be exaggerated, due to the fear that it engenders among the people of Rintja. However, there is also a second, much more dramatic, thought-provoking possibility.

In 1997, Mares included a detailed account of the veo in one of his excellent cryptozoological books, *Svet Tajemných Zvířat*, and noted that during the Pleistocene epoch (2 million to 10,000 years ago), a huge species of pangolin, *Manis palaeojavanicus*, measuring over 8ft (2.4m) long, occurred in the Greater Sunda Islands of Borneo and Java. Accordingly, Mares deems it possible that either this species, or some other, even larger and still unknown pangolin, survives today on little-explored Rintja, where it is called the veo by the natives, but remains undiscovered by science. However, it may not be for much longer; one of Mares's colleagues plans to launch an expedition to Rintja in search of this cryptic beast.

KARL SHUKER HAS A LIFELONG INTEREST IN CRYPTOZOLOGY. HE IS A ZOOLOGICAL CONSULTANT, LECTURER AND AUTHOR OF SEVERAL BOOKS DEVOTED TO CRYPTOZOLOGY.



OFF TO SEE THE LIZARD:  
Is the veo a pangolin?



## L'AFFAIRE SOKAL

It appeared to be just another article attacking scientific orthodoxy but it was a hoax. MIKE JAY discovers how a New York University physics professor rocked academia.

### IT EXPOSED HIS POST-MODERN ARTICLE AS A PARODY "LIBERALLY SALTED WITH NONSENSE AND PLAYS ON WORDS"

**O**ne of the things I've always hoped to see before I die – along with the Northern Lights and Angkor Wat – is a real, full-on intellectual furore. Giordano Bruno barking post-Copernican philosophy at a seething mass of Elizabethan Oxford scholastics; Darwin informing a monocled, moustached and outraged Royal Society of their descent from apes. I was under the impression that this kind of thing didn't happen any more – that the Marcuse-waving students at the Paris barricades in 1968 were some kind of last hurrah and that the academic world had retreated into a progressive and terminal irrelevance where the only heated discussion was about their grant cuts. But this July a real live furore – which erupted in the summer of 1996 and made its chaotic and sometimes violent way across the States, South America and Europe – finally descended on London for all to witness.

The first salvo in this furore, as in many others throughout history, was a well-judged and masterful hoax. It appeared in *Social Text*, the most revered journal of post-modern philosophy and cultural theory and bastion of the radical left theories of Baudrillard, Derrida, Lacan and their compadres. Its title, "Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity", put it squarely in line with the attacks on the assumptions of scientific orthodoxy which filled the rest of the quarterly issue. The only unusual feature was that its author wasn't a black-clad, balding *rive gauche* intellectual but a New York University physicist named Allan Sokal.

The content, too, toed the *Social Texts* party line. It was an assault on the way in which modern scientists still "cling to the dogma... that there exists an external world, whose properties... are encoded in 'eternal' physical laws", despite the fact that "feminist and post-structuralist critiques have demystified the substantive content of mainstream Western scientific practice, revealing the ideology of domination concealed behind the facade of 'objectivity'". Science, it claims, is "at bottom a social and linguistic construct" with no grounds for the 'objective' and privileged status which it continues to claim.

It followed this up with several thousand words of post-modern analysis of quantum mechanics, showing how science itself has demonstrated that there is no

external reality 'out there'. It also cited Werner Heisenberg and Niels Bohr's famous quotes about subjectivity of observation alongside the similar sentiments of post-modernists like Derrida and Lacan, whose ideas lean heavily on quantum-derived concepts like 'flux', 'nonlinearity' and 'interconnectedness'.

All of this is, of course, strikingly familiar from the works of Charles Fort. Fort's famous assertions – for example "I can conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while" – go unmentioned, but are intimately connected with both the quantum and the post-modern theories cited here. Like Heisenberg and Bohr, Fort was part of a post-Great-War sceptical counterculture which resisted the dominant orthodoxies of science and the extraordinary power with which modern technology was investing them. And for those of us who regard Fort as a largely forgotten voice in the wilderness, it's salutary to note that his world-view is alive and well in the mainstream of modern philosophy, especially in the French-speaking world.

**S**o far, so oblique. But the furore started with another missive from Alan Sokal, released on publication of the *Social Texts* article. Entitled "A Physicist Experiments with Cultural Studies", it exposed his post-modern article as a parody "liberally salted with nonsense", intentionally written "so that any competent physicist or mathematician... would realise that it is a spoof." "Nowhere in all of this", he continues, "is there anything resembling a logical sequence of thought; one finds only citations of authority, plays on words, strained analogies, and bald assertions".

So what was Sokal's point? "While my method was satirical", he asserts, "my motivation is utterly serious". He launches into a broad attack on the silliness and fuzzy thinking emanating from modern left-wing thinking. None of this radical anti-realism and subjectivism is going to help us find treatments for AIDS, or solutions for global warming – or to combat the patently false and dangerous ideas which pervade modern society, economics and politics.

All this was, of course, seized on gleefully by the American right-wing media: another exposure of political correctness, multi-culturalism and so-called cultural tolerance. But Sokal wasn't writing for them.

A left-leaning scientist who taught in Nicaragua under the Sandinista regime, his point was that left-wing thought, traditionally the enemy of dogma and humbug, was in danger of surrendering the high ground of common sense through intellectual laziness.

What Sokal succeeded in doing was to annoy

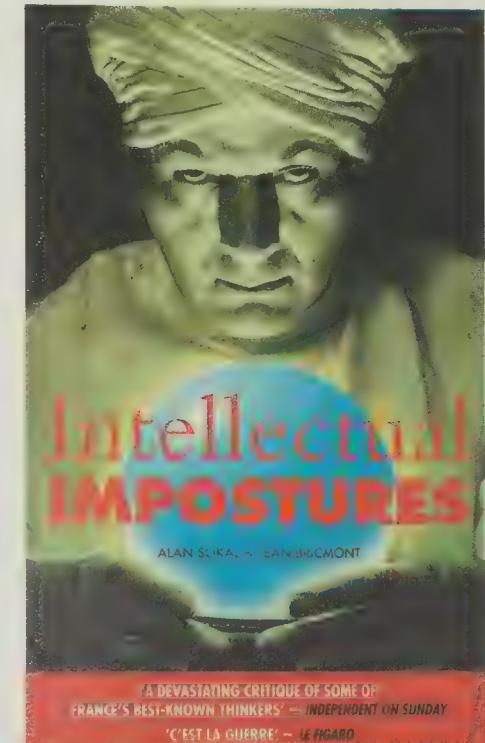
almost everyone, a high-profile gadfly strategy which Fort would almost certainly have enjoyed hugely, despite – or even because of – the fact that Sokal was arguing the exact opposite of Fort's sceptical position. The article was followed by a book, *Intellectual Impostures* – which dissects the silliest anti-scientific claims of the most revered post-modernists in detail – and a lecture tour which confronted him with legions of frothing Lacanian analysts in Buenos Aires and near-riots in the heartland of intellectual subjectivism, Paris. Finally he arrived in London in July, where his appearance not only packed out the lecture hall at the ICA but forced a video-link to an overflow room where truculent scientists and outraged post-modernists hung from the rafters to watch what Baudrillard would no doubt have called "a representation of a representation".

**S**okal in the flesh is the science nerd incarnate; a man who looks like it would have been a close run thing with a 12-year-old Bill Gates for 'Young Scientist of the Year' and whose dress-sense and side-parting have clearly changed endearingly little since his early adolescence. The format of the evening was a head-to-head with Christopher Norris, a philosophy of science professor from Swansea and unashamed Derrida-fancier.

Unfortunately, my wilder expectations of a philosophical dust-up were defused by Norris' eminently reasonable and conciliatory approach. While complimenting Sokal on his unerring nose for the silliest bits of post-modern cultural theory, he convincingly defended the general principle that scientific theories aren't copyrighted by scientists and their use as metaphors in the broader world is essentially fair game. Sokal concurred, but pointed out that the function of metaphors is to explain complicated things by recourse to simpler ones rather than the other way around and it was clear from the examples he picked – as well as from his own spoof article – that quantum physics, chaos theory and the rest were being cited without explanation as spurious justification for things to which they had no real relevance. (In his article, for example, he claimed that Rupert Sheldrake's 'morphogenetic field' theory is a theory of quantum gravity – not only nonsense, but a claim which Sheldrake himself has never made, and yet one which passed cleanly under the radar of the *Social Text* editors). It was also ironic that anti-scientists should – in a way that will be more than familiar to fortean readers – lean triumphantly on science to prove their point, even in situations where science patently contradicts them.

Nevertheless, Norris patiently rolled back the scope of Sokal's claims to a point where an unlikely consensus was reached: that

### ANTI-SCIENTIFIC RELATIVISM MAY NOT BE SCIENCE'S FAULT, BUT IS SCIENCE IN SOME WAY RESPONSIBLE FOR IT?



there's nothing wrong with a sociology of science, that the way in which scientists operate and are funded is undoubtedly a valid element in assessing their claims, and that in fact the more triumphalist claims of science and the 'Whig history' of its evolution are no less pompous and absurd than post-modern cultural theory. Norris even went on the offensive over quantum mechanics – a subject which Sokal confesses to avoiding entirely because of the amount of scientific silliness involved – maintaining that in terms of bollocks-per-column-inch Bohr was probably a worse offender in this area than Baudrillard. Sokal resisted this, but admitted that comparisons were difficult in an area where both candidates were so close to being off the scale.

Despite the disappointingly high level of agreement, it was consistently interesting to witness the repeated demolitions of both scientific arrogance and cultural relativism, and the strange *folie-à-deux* that the Sokal furore has ignited between them. Sokal was both explicit and interesting about his views that, while mathematics and physics do represent an objective truth about reality (do we really deny that nuclear bombs work?), their truths are also extremely limited and shouldn't be used to exclude other forms of truth. If you find it annoying when, for example, New Age mystics claim that chaos theory "proves" their point, but also when scientists claim that physics "proves" mysticism to be false, this debate was a fascinating exercise in trying to work out which you find more annoying and why.

**J**ust as interesting, though, was to consider why exactly it was that this debate was happening in the first place. If science is our unquestioned orthodoxy, why was Sokal's hoax such a rallying-cry for scientists who feel that they're being "oppressed" by a new orthodoxy of relativism and subjectivism? Is this what Sokal is demonstrating – that the reigning dogmas are not scientific but anti-scientific? Or is this simply paranoia within the scientific community, a paranoia that has its roots in the way in which science has become marginalised from common sense and popular understanding? The anti-scientific relativism may not strictly be science's fault, but is science nevertheless in some way responsible for it?

I left wondering what Fort would have made of the evening. Probably more than me, he would have disagreed with everything that everyone had said. I doubt whether he would have felt that the 'new orthodoxy' which Sokal was complaining about was overwhelming enough for him to switch his (of course, temporary) allegiance to the 'new heresy' of scientific objectivity. The easy conclusion is, of course, to conclude that both science and social theory are equally subject to pomposness, pretension and arrogance and to bicker about which of the two is worse is of limited interest. But I suspect that most dedicated truth-seekers, whatever their colour or stripe, would feel a sneaking uneasiness about leaving it at that.

MIKE JAY IS A FREELANCE WRITER WHO HAS PREVIOUSLY WRITTEN FOR FORTÉAN TIMES ON PRIMORDIAL ALPHABETS, THE HOLLOW EARTH AND RENAISSANCE MARVEL CHAMBERS.

WRIT STUFF: Sokal's controversial book, *Intellectual Impostures*, co-written by Jean Bricmont and published by Profile Books (1998).

#### READER OFFER

Fortean Times readers can purchase *Intellectual Impostures* at the special price of £8.50 (inc p&p) – a saving of £1.49 on the normal price. Simply call 01789 490215 or use the form on page 33.



EYE OF THE STORM:  
Physicist Alan Sokal

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## MIND CONTROL HIGH SCHOOL

The new conspiracy movie *Disturbing Behaviour* has URI DOWBENKO nervously glancing over his shoulder – the one without the mind control chip embedded in it...

If you ever thought that football players – or even ‘jocks’ in general – acted like a mind control cult, then *Disturbing Behaviour* will confirm your darkest suspicions.

When Steve (James Marsden) and his family move to the northwest town of Cradle Bay, Gavin (Nick Stahl) gives him a tour of the cliques in high school: These are strictly defined subcultures. There's the Motorheads (car buffs who wear sideburns and eat, sleep and dream about cars); the Microgeeks (computer-nerd types who live and die for computers); the Skaters (skateboarders in baggy clothes); the Freaks (stoners who live and die for bud, not brewskis); and, of course, the Blue Ribbons (jocks and their girlfriends who dress in 1950s-style letter

most recently by Wayne Morris and his CKLN Mind Control Series comprising interviews with mind control survivors and therapists who reveal a literal epidemic of illegal human guinea pig experiments (<http://mk.net/~mcf/ckln-cst.htm>).

Alex Constantine, author of *Psychic Dictatorship in America* (Feral House, 2532 Lincoln Blvd, Suite 359, Venice, CA 90291) writes about the hidden history of CIA and Pentagon mind control experiments on involuntary human subjects. “The wave of ritual child abuse allegations that swept the country in the 1980s cloaked federal psychotronic and eugenics experiments on young children,” he claims. “As one adult survivor of psychotronic mind control concludes, ‘covert arms’ of government have coined the term screen memories to describe the obfuscational memories impressed by the abusers themselves.” The CIA and military establishment ‘must at all costs disguise their abuse in order to continue experimentation with psychotronics.’

“The cover story originated with the CIA’s mind control netherworld,” Constantine continues. “Nazi inspired scientists, the survivor says, perform medical tests during the abuse event, such as implementation of biotelemetric tracking devices into nasal cavities and ear canals.”

Hey, electronic brain implants are the mind control device of choice in *Disturbing Behaviour*, a *cinema a clef*, if you will.

Cathy O’Brien’s book *Trance Formation of America* also provides a terrifying account of a mind control slave (also available at <http://www.tranceformation.com>). “Under MK-Ultra Project Monarch trauma-based mind control, I lost control over my own free will thoughts. I could not think to question, reason, or consciously comprehend,” she writes.

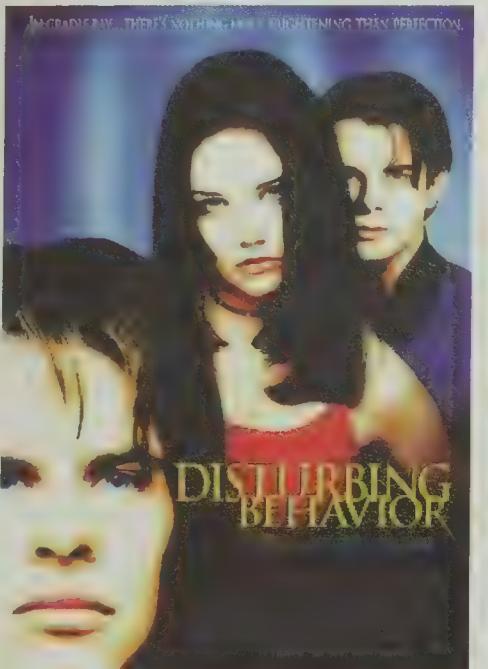
In the movie, the mind controllers use electronic chip implants rather than Prozac or Ritalin, which turn rebellious confused kids into letter-jacket wearing zombies who hang out at the Yogurt Shoppe where Wayne Newton’s *Danke Schoen* plays non-stop – the ultimate mind control theme song.

*Disturbing Behaviour* continues in the grand tradition of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *The Stepford Wives*, and *The Village of the Damned*.

When Steve confronts the school psychologist, a neuropharmacologist who first experimented with brain implants on his own daughter, the unrepentant mind controller tells him that “science is God.” Real-life mad scientists, involved in the CIA’s MKULTRA mind control experiments using human guinea pigs, include Dr Sidney Gottlieb. According to John Marks’s *The Search for the Manchurian Candidate*, CIA operative George White wrote to Gottlieb: “I toiled wholeheartedly in the vineyards because it was fun, fun, fun. Where else could a red-blooded American boy lie, kill, cheat, rape and pillage with the sanction and blessing of the All-Highest?” According to Senate testimony, Gottlieb used drugs, hypnosis, and trauma-based programming on unwitting Americans for mind control experiments. For more info, see the Freedom of Thought Foundation website by W H Bowart, author of *Operation Mind Control* at <http://www.azstarnet.com/~freeth>.

Gavin, the high school whistleblower, has a dark secret. He knows something weird is going on because he’s seen a football player blow away his date and then the investigating cop. The other cop let the jock go and Gavin hasn’t been the same since. “Mind control – a new kind of cool,” Gavin tells Steve. “They’re programmed, brainwashed.” Parents of troubled teens are convinced that a weekend Enlightenment Seminar will turn their kid into docile, straight-A students. It does – for a Faustian price.

Written by Scott Rosenberg and directed by David Nutter, who’s done some *X Files* TV episodes, *Disturbing Behaviour* is a clever little gem of a movie about mind control in America. CIA mind control experiments have, of course, been well documented –



jackets and zealously pursue fulfilment in bake sales, pep rallies and football games).

Rachel (Katie Holmes) a toned-down gothic kind of girl who dresses in black and tells Steve that “Gavin thinks that some sinister force has taken over.”

Gavin, the high school whistleblower, has a dark secret. He knows something weird is going on because he’s seen a football player blow away his date and then the investigating cop. The other cop let the jock go and Gavin hasn’t been the same since. “Mind control – a new kind of cool,” Gavin tells Steve. “They’re programmed, brainwashed.” Parents of troubled teens are convinced that a weekend Enlightenment Seminar will turn their kid into docile, straight-A students. It does – for a Faustian price.

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URI DOWBENKO IS CHAIRMAN AND CEO OF NEW IMPROVED ENTERTAINMENT CORP. HE CAN BE REACHED BY EMAIL AT [u.dowbenko@mailcity.com](mailto:u.dowbenko@mailcity.com)

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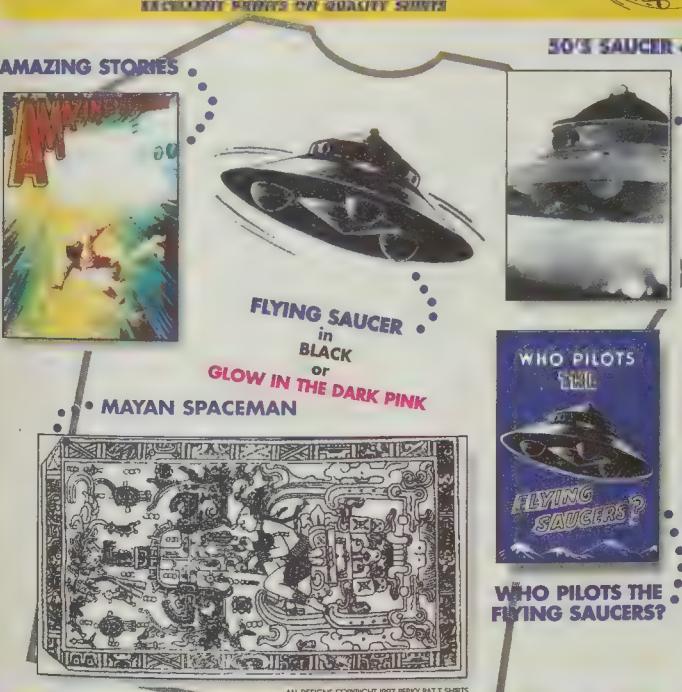
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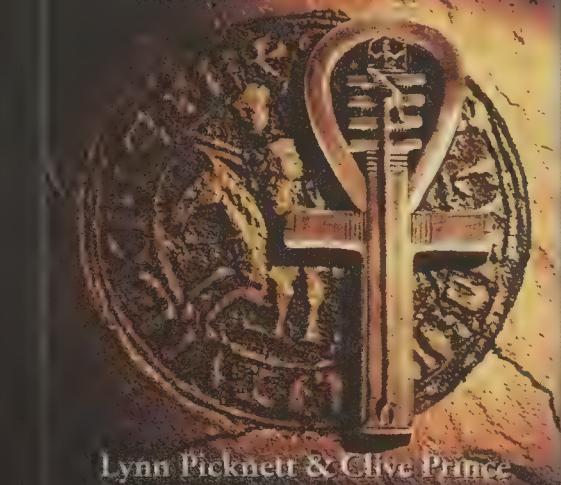
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## LETTERS

## LETTERS



## CARNIVOROUS FÜHRER

**W**as Hitler a vegetarian? [FT114:24]. The answer is yes. Two men who knew the Führer well, Armaments Minister Albert Speer and General Heinz Guderian, both mention the fact in their autobiographies. However, Hitler's decision to refrain from eating meat had nothing to do with ideology. He adopted a vegetarian diet in 1935 to relieve the symptoms of what was possibly an imaginary gastric illness. About this time he also came under the influence of quack doctor Theodor Morell, who advocated injections of pulverised bulls' testicles as well as vitamins, hormones, dextrose and phosphorous. Far from wanting to emulate their leader, Hitler's inner circle regarded his diet as inadequate and Dr Morell's methods as highly dangerous. Even Eva Braun refused his treatment.

SANDRA EVANS  
Exeter, Devon

## COFFEE, NOT SUGAR

**M**y letter about excessive coffee-drinking being a possible factor in Spontaneous Human Combustion [FT114:51] contained an error. I meant to say that the 10-15 spoonfuls were instant coffee rather than sugar. I rather doubt that too much sugar would do anything other than rot the old lady's teeth (if she had any).

SIMON GILMAN  
London

## CAN IT BE TRUE?

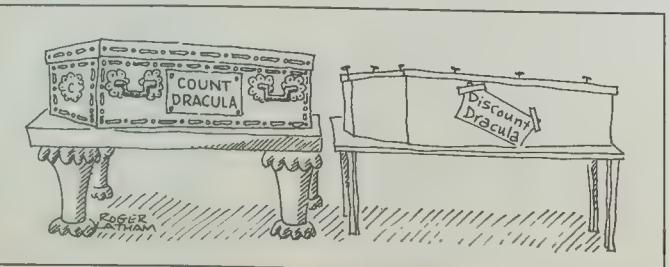
I read an amusing report many years ago to the effect that in the early days of cars, the only two cars in a US city had crashed into each other. The story has stayed in the back of my mind ever since, and recent attempts to source it have proved fruitless. I wonder if anyone knows the details of this perhaps apocryphal story.

BILL WEAVER  
yikes@tig.com.au

## DREAM HOUSE

**F**or 20 years or so I have had a recurring dream involving a large house. I am apparently at some time in the past, possibly the late 1700s. The house is large, long, but generally only one room deep. The most unusual feature is an upstairs bedroom with no windows, approached via a staircase that goes up the centre of the house. On looking left there is a door to the bedroom and a passage-way goes either side of the room.

The room is ventilated by a large chimney, through which the sky is visible. There may also be a small cottage at the back of this house, and possibly it is near the coast, maybe a west-facing coast. The surrounding landscape is gently hilly, rather like Devon, although



I don't believe that is where it is. This dream has always been so vivid and clear, although I have no idea whether the person I am during the dream is male or female; and so persistent that it makes me wonder if it has any significance. Does anyone recognise a house like this? Or can anyone suggest why dreams like this recur so often over such a long period of time?

SANDRA EVANS  
Exeter, Devon

## SADLY INANIMATE

**I**n Timothy Good's response [FT113:51] to my review of his book *Alien Base* [FT111:53], he appears to suggest that because "no-one has ever shown the objects in the Adamski photographs to be mundane and readily explainable," it is reasonable to conclude that the photos depict genuine, manned, interplanetary - or interstellar - craft. This may be a useful approach for a successful UFO author to take where the photographer and contactee are long dead.

My own instinct would be to ask what proof is available that the tiny, rotund, aerodynamic disasters depicted by Adamski and Menger ever flew live humanoid beings here from another planet. Maybe a scientific assessment of the viability of these sadly inanimate, model-like objects to carry sentient beings across the vastness of space would be more useful than belated photographic analysis. Indeed, I don't have high hopes for its findings.

Good hasn't said which photographs are to be analysed, and as for their quality and suitability for analysis, his publishers have said only that: "There are no original

## INSIDE-OUTSIDE

**A** crucial part of the fortean experience is getting beyond the partially thought-out notions of subjectivity and objectivity (and the notion that objectivity is superior to subjectivity). There are two subjectivities, primary and secondary (anything known through direct personal experience - that fire is hot, that today is/isn't my birthday, etc - is primary and reliable, whereas opinions, beliefs, concepts etc are secondary and often unreliable). Similarly, there are two objectivities (anything directly demonstrated objectively - such as the existence of radio waves - is primary and reliable, whereas anything theorised about the nature of the objective world - such as the material universe beginning with a "Big Bang" - is secondary and often unreliable).

When this is properly formulated, it is clear that primary objectivity is only the objective aspect of primary subjectivity and that primary subjectivity is superior to objectivity generally. Also, both secondary subjectivity and secondary objectivity are shown to be products of a preconditioned world view (subconsciously programmed).

ROGER LATHAM

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OR E-MAIL TO sieveking@forteantimes.com

Scientists often break their own rules and put forward as objective something that is secondarily subjective. For instance, in popular science TV programmes I continually hear the statement: "The universe began with a Big Bang" - never "Some scientists theorise the universe began with a Big Bang while others disagree".

Equally, many scientists won't accept as real (factual or truthful) any 'paranormal' phenomenon or experience as it's "only subjective" and can't be demonstrated objectively. However, objective science has no business in the subjective world, as by definition nothing subjective can be demonstrated objectively. For instance, science can't objectively prove the existence of dreams - personal accounts of dreams are "only subjective", and an EEG reading backed by a claim that the subject dreamt during REM sleep doesn't produce objective proof of a dream, only a subjective claim backed by secondary data, which wouldn't be accepted scientifically if the subject claimed to be lucid dreaming, telepathically in rapport with someone or something else, above the scientist and the EEG machine OBE-wise, seeing the scientist's aura, etc during the REM period.

CHAY TANA  
Skegness, Lincolnshire

## MALAYSIAN OCTOPOID

**I**n my Forum piece "Titans Below!" [FT113:47] I stated: "According to a letter to *Pursuit* (v21,n2,p89,1988) by Keith L Partain, a colleague of his described seeing 'an enormous octopoid, possibly of ET origin.'" What Mr Partain actually wrote was: "...a private conversation with a fellow anomalist netted an unusual report of a cyclopean octopoid of presumably extradimensional origin appearing briefly in Malaysia in 1969. Regrettably, this gentleman could not recall the citation. (It was recalled to be a 'Bermuda Triangle' type book.)" I apologise for the error.

JOHN VINCENT SANDERS  
New York, USA

## AT THE HUB

**I**n *New Lands*, Charles Fort made numerous references to geocentrism, in particular the Tychoic model. All men once relied on their senses, and held that the Earth was located at the centre of the universe. With the rise of Copernican heliocentrism in the 17th century, and today's Einsteinian acentrism, purposeless existentialism has gained ground, with pernicious results that are everywhere to be seen: "The difference in psychology

between pre- and post- Copernican Man was so great, that it was as if a different species of being had arisen on the globe!" (Arthur Koestler). "No idea has had a greater influence on the human spirit than the doctrine of Copernicus. All that went up in smoke with this change: a second Paradise, a world of innocence, poetry and piety, the witness of the senses, the conviction of the poetical and religious faith..." (Goethe).

Today there is an increasing number of scientists belonging to such groups as the Association for Biblical Astronomy (formerly the Tychoian Society after the great Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe) in the USA and CESHE (Cercle Scientifique et Historique) in Europe, which have gone back to the ancient geocentric model: that the Earth is indeed located at the exact geographical centre of the universe, with the entire cosmos wheeling majestically about it.

They bring a lot of recently discovered evidence in astronomy and quantum physics (eg Varshni's Result, the Barr Effect, uniformity of the Background Radiation, Aspden's super-dense ether theory etc) to support their view, as well as refuting many of the so-called "proofs" for Galileo's heliocentrism, Einstein's relativity, acentrism and so on. Interestingly, the dozens of famous experiments by Airy, Michelson-Morley, Klinkerfues, Hoek, Jaseja, Troughton-Noble, Mascart etc, have all been unable to detect or measure even a smidgen of the Earth's purported 1,000mph (1,609 km/h) rotational and 67,000mph (107,823 km/h) translational velocities!

All the alleged "proofs" for a moving Earth, such as Foucault's Pendulum, Coriolis Forces, parallax and geostationary satellites, cannot distinguish between a rotating Earth and a universe rotating about the Earth. As the atheist Bertrand Russell admitted: "Whether the Earth rotates once a day from west to east as Copernicus taught, or the heavens revolve once a day from east to west as his predecessors held, the observable phenomena will be exactly the same - a metaphysical assumption has to be made."

AMNON GOLDBERG  
London

*Editor's note: Mr Goldberg has been writing to us for years about geocentrism. To forestall a massive post box, we would like to emphasise Bertrand Russell's point that the geocentric/heliocentric debate cannot be decided empirically, but is a matter of metaphysics. Movement has to be defined in relation to something stationary, and what we choose to regard as stationary is quite arbitrary. Incidentally, there is no evidence that Fort was a geocentrist any more than a heliocentrist; the Doctrine of Continuity bypasses the argument.*

## FACING IT

**W**hile pondering the cosmic significance of the Princess Diana damp stain simulacrum [FT111:16, 114:52], it occurred to me that it is not a picture of the late Princess, but is in fact one, or all, of the following:

'Honest Abe' Lincoln, a strangely chinless Mark Twain, little-known 19th century actor Herbert Beerbohm Shrub, or perhaps even an upside-down duck.

There were more that occurred to me, but some of them were silly.

DEAN YEACLE  
Port Chester, New York



## NO NEWS

Regarding the Mythchaser [FT114:24]: in the summer of 1977, when I was a young reporter with the M Publications Group of local newspapers in Tayside, one entire issue of the weekly *Forfar Times* was cancelled because absolutely nothing happened in Forfar during the two weeks of the traditional Forfar holiday fortnight.

ROBIN GAULDIE  
Balham, London

## NO SKI LIFTS

The death of Matthew Hubal on a ski run in San Anselmo [FT113:24] must be apocryphal. I grew up in San Anselmo, just north of San Francisco, and presently reside in Oakland across the Bay. Maybe once in eight years the hills here get a coating of snow, and there are no, repeat no, ski lifts of any kind in San Anselmo, or any other Bay Area town.

JOHN EASTMAN  
Oakland, California



## LETTERS



## SPREADING LIKE WILDFIRE

The following story seemed to spring up overnight and immediately filled my fortean nose with the smell of fish. When I arrived at work one Monday last May, a colleague was relating that the daughter of a friend of hers had spent the previous Friday evening at one of the well known pubs/clubs in Cardiff. During the night, she felt a scratch or prick in the back of her leg. She rubbed her leg, but thought no more about it. Later in the evening, she opened her bag to look for something and found a card stating: "Welcome to the AIDS club". She immediately contacted the police and was tested.

The test proved positive and my colleague was visibly upset about the whole business.

I imagine that most readers will be familiar with the urban legend involving a malicious AIDS carrier spreading the virus and then leaving a calling card. I brought this up and was told that the friend was in her mid-forties and had no reason to lie. This seemed fair enough, considering that urban myths are traditionally so far removed as to make them untraceable.

Shortly afterwards, another colleague had a telephone call from a friend of hers in another department. Had she heard about the attacks at the same pub on the previous Friday night? This time it was a sister of the caller's friend with the same story and outcome. During the next hour there were no less than five people who knew of someone who had been to the pub on the Friday night and had contracted the disease. The story inflated ridiculously – one poor soul had been infected on the Friday and died by Monday! We called the police to see if they had had any reports of these attacks. They hadn't. We were fairly satisfied the whole affair was just a tall tale retold.

I then spoke to a friend of mine. The same story was being told in his office. During the following week it appeared that half of Cardiff knew of someone who had been infected on the same night by the anonymous (and very busy) attacker.

This may also explain the ghostly closing of the curtains, as no self-respecting player would want his board to be seen like that!

STEVEN POLK  
Volcano, Hawaii

## CONTEST IMPOSSIBLE

Regarding the chess-with-a-ghost report [FT112:21]: if David Morris truly loved playing chess, it's no wonder he keeps moving the pieces if his board is left set up as shown in the picture. The poor chap must be spinning in his grave, as the board is not set up in readiness for a game. Nor could the position ever have arisen during play.

This may also explain the ghostly closing of the curtains, as no self-respecting player would want his board to be seen like that!

DAVID J BURNS  
Edinburgh

licensed premises in the city centre." I was surprised by the number of people who told the story and involved friends or relatives in what would have been a serious and distressing matter. It was almost as if it was a case of one-upmanship on the previous (re)telling. However, after the tale was debunked it was forgotten about and no-one thought any less of the people who had claimed it was true.

Did any other readers hear the same or a similar story in another part of the country around the same time?

PETER ROGERS  
KrazeHoss@aol.com

## HEARING THINGS

Sid Que's article on people who hear voices ["Radiohead" FT113:34-39] starts from the assumption that either hearers are crazy or else someone is beaming voices at them. It has long been the standard assumption among psychologists that hearing voices is direct evidence of a psychotic condition, and by the standard definition a prominent hallucination of a voice is enough to diagnose schizophrenia and quite possibly send the hearer into a mental institution; but this assumption is not as reasonable as it might seem. D L Rosenhahn carried out some famous research which involved sending volunteers into psychiatric hospitals claiming that they had heard voices<sup>1</sup>. The volunteers otherwise behaved normally and answered questions

The barrier between the conscious and unconscious is less solid than we might think, and voice-hearers might provide some valuable insight into the workings of the mind. Looking for secret agencies with exotic voice-projection gear is a rather paranoid response to something that should be investigated as a strange but entirely natural phenomenon.

about themselves accurately. In spite of the fact that they were perfectly sane, everything they did was interpreted by hospital staff as evidence of abnormality, and the only suspicion that they were not mad came from other inmates. Forteans will recognise the signs of science failing to cope because of mistaken assumptions.

Hearing voices is much more common than was previously thought and, according to US research, 60 per cent of hearers lead normal, sane lives. Charles Dickens, Beethoven, Jean-Paul Sartre and the actress Zoe Wannamaker all heard voices, and for the first three at any rate the source is unlikely to have been CIA microwave beams.

This is a curious phenomenon which is under-researched for the simple reason that people are unlikely to give evidence if they are going to be diagnosed as insane. How many UFO reports would there be if seeing lights in the sky was considered to be proof of madness? Fortunately, the situation is slowly changing, and Britain now has a Hearing Voices Network<sup>2</sup> to provide support for voice hearers and to educate society about the condition.

The barrier between the conscious and unconscious is less solid than we might think, and voice-hearers might provide some valuable insight into the workings of the mind. Looking for secret agencies with exotic voice-projection gear is a rather paranoid response to something that should be investigated as a strange but entirely natural phenomenon.

DAVID HAMBLING  
Wembley, London



## MOMENTO MORI

I took this photograph earlier this year by the side of Glendalough in County Wicklow, Ireland. I thought you might appreciate the 'skull lichen' on the rock. It was quite close to St Kevin's Cave where the said saint is supposed to have wrestled with the Devil in the form of a woman.

STUART COSLING  
London

about themselves accurately. In spite of the fact that they were perfectly sane, everything they did was interpreted by hospital staff as evidence of abnormality, and the only suspicion that they were not mad came from other inmates. Forteans will recognise the signs of science failing to cope because of mistaken assumptions.

I would direct readers interested in the effects of microwave radiation on animals to the following:

C K Chou et al (1982): *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, No. 71:1321-1334. B Nordwall (1997): *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, 10 Mar 1997. J A Tanner (1966): *Nature* 210:636. J A Tanner et al (1967): *Nature* 216:1139.

L MOOLE  
London

The "Wavies" article leaves a serious question unanswered: have any of these people tried to shield themselves? A microwave oven contains a Faraday cage, visible in the glass of the door, to keep the microwaves in during cooking. Wavies can try a simple test: place the head inside a microwave oven (door open, power off). Do the voices get quieter? If they get louder, presumably the oven has been damaged.

Now that rap stars can buy kevlar clothing, perhaps the Faraday Hairnet could be the next big thing in protective fashion – to protect you from your mobile phone.

MARK NORMAN  
Nottingham

## CONVICT SHADES

Australia was colonised after the coming of the 'First Fleet' in 1788. The colonists moved quickly inland from the Sydney area and up into the breadbasket of the Hawkesbury River.

In 1974 I lived in the area between Sydney and the Hawkesbury Basin. I was a young teenager and went camping with a friend about two miles (3km) from my parents' home. The area was thick bush with a number of streams in steep and narrow canyons. We decided to spend the night in a sandstone 'wind cave' which had been used as a campsite by the aboriginal people for thousands of years. It was along the side of one canyon above a convict-built dam on a nearby creek. As we made our way to the spot, we came across two other campers and agreed to camp together and share our food and fire.

At about 9pm, the temperature was close to 29°C and the smoke from the fire was whistling out of a hole in the roof of the cave. There was a lot of clattering along the opposite face of the canyon and lights among the thick eucalyptus trees. We saw an adventure in stalking the party of hikers we believed to be moving down the track beyond the trees, so we broke into two pairs each containing one person from each original group.

The first pair headed west to move to the top of the far side of the canyon and come down behind the lights while my partner and I headed east to put ourselves in deep

## NOT SO ALIEN

Zecharia Sitchin's article "Ancient space module in Istanbul?" [FT113:17] was fascinating if somewhat puzzling. The drawing is indeed creepily redolent of a Mercury Space Module combined with the aesthetics of a Vesta moped. However, comparing the photograph with the drawing shows a certain selectivity in the rendering of the object: there is an exaggeration between the cleft of the 'boosters', a simplification of the details immediately behind the pointy bit at the 'front' and an inaccurate rendering of the 'skirt' immediately to the 'front' of the 'boosters'. If one rotates the photograph through 90 degrees so that the pointy bit comes at the top, the object takes on the appearance of a bearded warrior in a conical helmet.

LES PRINCE  
Edgbaston, Birmingham

*Editors' note: The same point about a bearded warrior was made by Dave Budd, Anthony McClusky, Jan Mura, Mark Norman and Curt van den Heuvel.*

WALTER I LANZBEIM  
Lugde, Germany

"Although the pilot's head was broken off," says Sitchin, "the light brown colouring of the object remained the same across the fracture: if it had been made of plaster of Paris and then painted over, the material's original white colour should have shown through."

There is, however, a very simple technique for adding a uniform stain to plaster: before adding water to the plaster, mix in powder paints blended to the colour desired for the finished artefact.

This of course doesn't prove the object in question is a forgery.

PAUL CATLOW  
Stockport, Greater Manchester

The caption: "Until recently, this mysterious statuette had only been seen outside the Museum as an illustration" is wrong.

The first photo was published in May 1994 in an article which I wrote for *Para*, an Austrian monthly. The photo also appeared in my book *Bevor die Sintflut kam* ("Before the Deluge"), published in the spring of 1996.

RICHARD COULSTOCK  
Edinburgh

## WORLD CUP ODDITY

The eight quarter-finalists in the World Cup were: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Denmark, France, Germany, Holland and Italy. ABCDFGHI. Missing is the letter 'E' – for England...

RICHARD COULSTOCK  
Edinburgh



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**ALAN F ALFORD**
*Hodder & Stoughton; 1998; £18.99  
pp.478; 31 colour plates; 24 b&w  
plates; 28 illus.; appendix; notes & bibli-  
ography; index. ISBN 0-340-69614-1*


**A**lan F Alford has the rare distinction of being *persona non grata* both with establishment Egyptology and with Hancock *et al.* He is also significant by his absence from the line-up of October's Questing Conference on 'Alternative Egypt' - passing strange, especially as Michael Rice, who has penned a highly complimentary foreword to *The Phoenix Solution*, is on the guest list himself. Don't expect to see Alford on the Giza Plateau for the Visions Travel Conference at the end of January either.

Our author, it seems, can't be all that concerned about this sorry state of affairs, for if what he wants is a seat at the table, *The Phoenix Solution* is not going to help him one little bit. He has fired an intellectual arrow straight through the gaping hole between the 'orthodox' and 'New Age' positions, thereby well and truly setting the Sphinx among the Ibises.

The book commences with a perceptive and erudite discussion of the possible origins of advanced knowledge in 'pre-history' - arguing that we hold far too many assumptions about the qualities and attributes of any supposed ancient culture.

Alford then continues with a masterly survey of what he calls the seven major pyramids - the Giza triumvirate, Sneferu's two at Dahshur, the Saqqara Step Pyramid (attributed to Djoser) and the collapsed Step Pyramid at Meidum. A comparative analysis of these seven pyramids - most revealingly of their geometry - from a non-aligned, non-prejudiced perspective pro-

vides Alford with a chance to go back to 'first principles' as well as to refine the revised chronology he began in *Gods of the New Millennium*. The upshot is that Sneferu based the Bent and Red Pyramids on a pre-existing Great Pyramid - the Second Pyramid being an earlier copy - and both Khufu and Khafre 'adopted' their Pyramids rather than built them.

One of the most significant facts about Alford is that he is a one-man band. While others have wasted precious time on political wrangles and pathetic infighting (see *FT112*), Alford has got on with the job, paying repeated visits to the sites, photographing them, and exhaustively following up leads in libraries and by correspondence. It was one of these letters that sowed the seed for this book, when U.S. astronomer Tom Van Flandern replied to an initial query about Sitchin's take on Planet X.

Alford's intimate knowledge of Babylonian and Sumerian mythology (a breadth of perspective that should put many other authors to shame) provides a good position from which to draw together the disparate threads of ancient history. Thus, when he compares the Sumerian *Enuma Elish* with Egyptian creation myths, *The Phoenix Solution* really starts to come to life. Alford has the kind of innate passion for mythology that is reminiscent of Joseph Campbell at his most accessible - and this passion is infectious. Although he covers a lot of ground, one gets carried along by his enthusiasm and constantly refreshed by his insights.

When Van Flandern's Exploded Planet Hypothesis (EPH) enters the argument, Alford has already prepared the way with 150 pages of clearly stated, lucidly reasoned and intriguingly innovative introduction, so Van Flandern's ideas just seem to fall directly into place.

The basic hypothesis is that there have been three catastrophic planetary explosions - a small watery moon 3.2 million years ago, 'Planet V' 65 million years ago and 'Planet K' 250 million years ago. These gave rise to the comets, the inner main asteroid belt and Mars (a moon of Planet V) and the mid-outer main belt respectively. Two 'intruder' planets - 'Planet T' and 'Planet X' - were responsible both for the explosions of V and K respectively, and for the inner and outer trans-Neponian belts.

Alford gradually develops a thesis in which the Egyptian gods represent planets - for instance, 'Horus' becomes a term for 'planet' and thus the 'Eye of Horus' is a satellite of that particular planet. By the end one is left with the feeling that the

EPH is both more immediate and more inclusive than simple star correlations, homogenous solar cults or trite polytheism/monotheism dualities.

*The Phoenix Solution* is not without its problems. Alford's perfectly understandable awareness that he is neither a career academic nor a card-carrying 'scientist' sometimes imbues his prose with just a bit too much justificatory pleading. His distancing of both himself and Van Flandern from Velikovsky (a trick at which Hancock himself is a past master) is somewhat flawed and he is often too dismissive and generalising when dealing with what he calls 'New Age' Egyptologists and their work.

It's also sadly inevitable that the book's own subtitle (obviously a market-driven one) misrepresents Alford's own argument that any lost wisdom is far more likely to originate with a lost race than a lost civilisation.

The book demands - at the very least - serious engagement and intelligent discussion from readers, as well as some dedicated and original follow-up research from students of astronomy and mythology. Don't make the mistake of ignoring this book - it is one of the most fascinatingly innovative (and wholeheartedly fortean in the truest sense) attempts at a turnkey solution to mythology for the last twenty-five years.

If nothing else, *The Phoenix Solution* will hopefully go some way to scuppering the blatant cronyism that has become so rife among those whose bread and butter lies in re-visioning Egyptology through an extant (and all but entirely burnt-out) alternative paradigm.

Alford's next project is an investigation into the transmission of the exploded planet cult into monotheistic religion and the Western Mystery Tradition. It will be interesting to see whether the Annunciation that figures in some Italian churches - the BVM receiving the Holy Spirit in the form not of a traditional dove, but a disembodied eye floating in space - is evidence of Catholicism's own hidden genesis in the mythology of the EPH.

**NIKLAS RASCHE**

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**COMPETITION 63****THE PHOENIX SOLUTION**

What is the name of the sacred Egyptian 'Stone', purportedly a meteorite fragment, that is intimately associated with the Phoenix?

There are copies of *The Phoenix Solution* for the first five answers excavated from our secret burial chamber. One entry per person only, to reach us by 31 December, to the address on page 60.

## REVIEWS

**OUR SECRET COUNTRY**

1aaaa

Our shelves are groaning with recent books from small publishers concerning local myths, legends

**WEST COUNTRY FOLKLORE, WEST COUNTRY WITCHCRAFT**

BOTH BY ROY AND URSULA RADFORD

both Peninsula Press, Box 31, Newton Abbot, Devon TQ12 5XH. 1998, pb price unknown, pp88, illus, bib. ISBN (folk) 1-872640-41-9, (witch) 1-872640-39-7.

**CROP CIRCLES OF WESSEX**

KENT GOODMAN

Wessex Books, 2 Station Cottages, Newton Toney, Salisbury, Wilts SP4 0HD. Undated, pb £3.99 (overseas \$10), pp29, bib, glossary, maps, colour illus. ISBN 0-9529619-0-3.

**HAMPSHIRE HAUNTINGS AND HEARSAY**

PATRICIA ROSS

Kings England Press, 21 Commercial Road, Industrial Estate, Goldthorpe, Rotherham, S. Yorks S63 9BL. 1998, pb £5.99, pp117, index, refs, illus. ISBN 1-872438-18-0.

**THE SMALLEST OF ALL PERSONS MENTIONED IN THE RECORDS OF LITTLENESS**

CABBY WOOD

Woods looks at the medical con-

dition bringing about Crachman's shrunken stature – proposing that she may have been much younger than was claimed – before turning to the remaining records of her existence. The circumstances of her life and exhibition are probed and the seedy motives of showmen examined. There are suggestions that the "handling" you were allowed to do for an extra shilling was less than wholesome, given the evidence of Crachman's autopsy at the hands of the no less seedy anatomists who bought her sad remains.

One of the most touching and incisive considerations of anatomical prodigies it has ever been my pleasure to read.

IAN SIMMONS

general writer and reader and so they should be regarded as a valuable resource in recording local lore, popular and modern. From private printings to more ambitious presentation, their publishers, too, should be commended for making the effort to place this variety before us.

BOB RICKARD

**WALKS IN MYSTERIOUS NORTH LAKELAND**

GRAHAM DUCDALE

Sigma Leisure, 1 South Oak Lane, Wimslow, Cheshire, SK9 6AR. 1998, pb, £6.95, pp160, illus. ISBN 1-8505-8626-8.

**HAUNTED SUSSEX TODAY**

ANDREW GREEN

SB Publications, 19 Grove Road, Seaford, East Sussex BN25 1TP. 1997, pb £5.99, pp87, bib, illus. ISBN 1-85770-121-6.

**MYSTERIES OF THE TOWER OF LONDON**

GEOFFREY ABBOTT

Hendon Publishing, Hendon Mill, Nelson, Lancs. 1998, pb (price unknown), pp128, index, bib, illus. ISBN 0-86067-151-8.

**WALKS IN MYSTERIOUS DEVON**

TREVOR BEER

Sigma Leisure, 1 South Oak Lane, Wimslow, Cheshire SK9 6AR. 1998, pb £6.95, pp126, illus, maps. ISBN 1-85058-607-1.

**UNEXPLAINED KENT**

BRIAN PAINE &amp; TREVOR STURGEES, EDs.

Breedon Books, 44 Friar Gate, Derby DE1 1DA. 1997, hb £10.99, pp144, illus. ISBN 1-85983-104-4.

1aaaa

Profile Books, 62 Queen Anne Street, London WC1A 2HN. 1998, pb £3.99, pp62, illus. ISBN 1-86197-088-9.

A small book about a small person. Caroline Crachman, the 'Sicilian Fairy', in her day London's most celebrated "dwarf", was less than 2ft (0.6m) tall. She died in 1824, a few days short of her ninth birthday it is said. In this essay – originally published in the *London Review of Books* – Woods examines Crachman's life with rare insight and compassion.

Woods looks at the medical con-

**CONSPIRACY  
HOW THE PARANOID STYLE FLOURISHES AND WHERE IT COMES FROM**

DANIEL PIPES

Free Press/Simon & Schuster, 1230 Ave. of the Americas, New York, NY 1002. 1997, hb £16.99, pp258, index, notes. ISBN 0-684-83131-7.

1aaaa

Louis Farrakhan (a black racist who holds Jews responsible for the deaths of 100 million enslaved Africans) and Lyndon LaRouche (a white racist who argues that Jews and Freemasons are behind just about everything reprehensible) were sufficiently united in their anti-Semitism to work together against the Anti-Defamation League. They may be barking mad and deeply unpleasant but they are quite unoriginal. Their beliefs fit neatly into templates created decades – even centuries – earlier. This book traces the literary traditions of conspiracy theories in order to explain their current importance and to extrapolate their future consequences.

Conspiricism, Pipes suggests, has been tightly linked to European history since 1750 – suspicions about Jews and secret societies emerged during the Crusades; conspiracy theories became a common interpretative tool during the Enlightenment; the French

Revolution's obsession with external enemies (Templars, Freemasons, Illuminati *et al*) upped the ante; the ideas became more sophisticated in the 19th century; paranoia came to power after World War I and peaked with World War II.

Lenin's and Hitler's professed beliefs in conspiracies laid the foundations for their totalitarian states. Before the breakdown of the Nazi-Soviet pact, the Soviet media complimented the Nazis on their treatment of Jews. Stalin's murder in March 1953 probably saved Russia's Jews from deportation to Siberia but, by then, at the very lowest estimate, 19.5 million Soviet citizens had died.

By the end of this elegant and lucid book, any desire to dismiss conspiracy theory as a harmless form of "the sophistication of the ignorant", as Richard Grenier put it, has more or less disappeared.

VAL STEVENSON

**THE NASTIEST THINGS EVER SAID****THE STUPIDIEST THINGS EVER SAID****STUPID SEX  
ROSS AND KATHRYN PETAS**

All published by Michael O'Mara Books Ltd, London. 1998, pb £3.99.

Nastiest: pp 128. ISBN 1-8547-9372-1

Stupidest: pp 120. ISBN 1-8547-9349-7

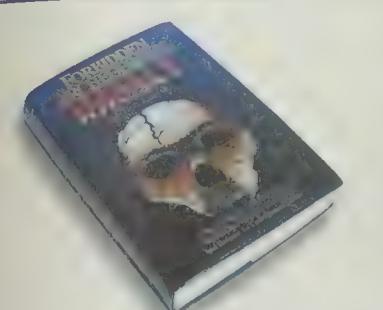
Sex: pp 120. ISBN 1-8547-9371-3

1aaaa

tion of his points, often requesting a dialogue that is never forthcoming. As the reviews veer further from the mainstream, they become more favourable. The book concludes with a lengthy and occasionally tedious collection of letters ranging from the sublime (prominent anthropologist William Howells) to the ridiculous (New Age flake Deeana Emerson). It's capped off by a protracted internet flame war that culminates with a call for advertiser boycotts and FCC fines for NBC for airing of *Mysterious Origins of Man*. Viva la discourse!

Their argument is persuasive and deserves consideration and debate, even though it is less persuasive than current evolutionary theories. If Cremo and Thompson have done nothing more than present evidence for a reassessment of the timeline, their work is important. Unfortunately, as *Forbidden Archeology's Impact* proves, mainstream scientists aren't always interested in debate. *Forbidden Archeology's Impact* is a collection of Cremo's papers, reviews of *Forbidden Archeology* and his responses to them, including reaction to a TV documentary called *Mysterious Origins of Man* which featured these ideas. As such, it is a valuable and disturbing look at the contempt many academics have for ideas outside the mainstream and for sincere intellectual discourse that threatens the current vogue theories.

TOM LIAM McDONALD

**FORBIDDEN ARCHEOLOGY'S IMPACT**

MICHAEL CREMO

Bhaktivedanta Book Publishing. 1998, hb \$35, pp569.

1aaaa

When the academic community responds with boiling vitriol to evidence or theories offered by "amateurs" from outside their cloistered ranks, you'd better believe those "amateurs" have touched a nerve. *Forbidden Archeology* (Cremo and Thompson, Bhaktivedanta Book Publishing, 1991) rubbed that nerve raw. This sequel, *Forbidden Archeology's Impact*, exposes its pulsing ends for all to see. It's not a pretty picture.

Within the 900+ pages of *Forbidden Archeology*, Cremo and Thompson presented an impressive body of anomalous evidence supporting the extreme antiquity of modern man. They argued that eoliths, incised bones, and the dating of remains place the emergence of modern man to over three million years ago, rather than the currently accepted 100,000. The first section of the book contains six interesting papers further outlining Cremo's ideas, placing them in the context of the Hindu Vedas and discussing the scientific response to them. The remainder is given over to reviews and letters concerning *Forbidden Archeology*, running the gamut of responses from the insulting and intellectually barren review by Yale's Jonathan Marks to the more carefully considered review by Kenneth Feder. Cremo prints positive and negative alike, responding to them all with page after page of clarifica-

Lucy, one of the oldest Ethiopian hominid skeletons was named after a Beatles song: true or false?

There are copies of *Hidden History of the Human Race* (the 1994 abridged hardback edition of *Forbidden Archeology*) and promo T-shirts for the first five skulls to prove the origins of man. One entry per person only, to reach us by 31 December, to the address on page 60.

## COMPETITION 64

Yet another collection of amusing trivia poking fun at the human condition in all its spiteful, idiotic or downright horny manifestations that manage to raise frequent bouts of laughter. Regrettably, they lack any form of source reference. If there's an empty space on the cistern of your privy, then you could easily do worse than to fill it with any one, or all three, of these books.

JOATHAN BRYANT



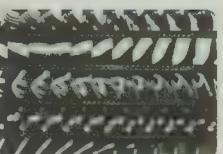
## MOVIES

To coincide with the spook season, the seventh entry in the *Halloween* movie series, *Halloween H2O*, is being unleashed. Jamie Lee Curtis reprises her role as Laurie Strode, 20 years on, still living



with the nightmare of Michael Myers, but now tucked away in a small town under an assumed name. The characters and storyline are solid, and the build-up remarkably suspenseful for what could easily have been a pretty pathetic return. Sadly, the last 10 minutes

herald a return to schlockville. (9 Oct) *The Exorcist* returns to the big screen for its 25th anniversary and, although the much-talked about missing sequences haven't been restored to the flick, it's still worth catching. (31 Oct)



On a more surreal note, The Lux Cinema are screening a collection of Man Ray shorts (8 and 11 Oct) featuring the Dadaesque *Emak Bakia* as well as his experiments with radiographic techniques. There is also an intriguing show entitled *Synaesthesia* with a collection of light shows and vortex films from the early Twenties to the late Sixties. (29 Oct)

The Lux Cinema  
Hoxton Square,  
London N1 6NU  
Tel: 0171 684 0201  
ETIENNE CIPILLAH

## TELEVISION



## SLOW BURN

'Spontaneous Human Combustion', QED, BBC1, broadcast 26 August, 1998.



In the past, TV documentaries have roundly dismissed the subject of spontaneous human combustion (SHC), explaining it as due to the 'candle effect' (in which the body fat is the fuel and the victim's clothes the wick). Yet the experiments used to demonstrate this were often inept and unconvincing. This half-hour show sought to demonstrate otherwise.

First we were treated to a preview of 'classic' SHC cases, com-

plete with stunned witnesses and baffled forensic investigators. That most of these were new and unfamiliar is a tribute to the BBC researchers (who took the subject seriously) and to the diligent research of Larry Arnold, probably the foremost fortean authority in such matters. Observations of cases in the US, France and England provided valuable clues; here was good testimony of fires, once started on a body, burning for hours with a low flame, reducing the bulk of a body to ashes as in the legendary description.

In the experiment set up by Dr John de Haan, a forensic specialist at the California Criminalistics Institute, a dead pig was wrapped in a blanket and placed in a replica living room, complete with nearby plastic radio and wooden table. (Pigs, apparently, closely simulate human fat content and distribution.) A small amount of petrol was poured on one shoulder and ignited. Five hours later, the 'body' was still burning and showed every sign of continuing if it had not been doused; its extremities were intact. The wooden table was barely scorched and the radio was partly melted from the general level of heat in the room.

BOB RICKARD

## MACWATCH

## ABDUCTION BY ALIENS OR SLEEP PARALYSIS?

Susan Blackmore, *Skeptical Inquirer*, Vol 22, No. 3 May/June 1998.

Alien abductions and sleep paralysis share many common features – full body paralysis, the sense of a malevolent presence and, in extreme cases, weird lights, vibrations and buzzing sounds. Blackmore asked 350 children and adults to imagine being abducted, answer questions based on those in the Roper Poll and finally draw the aliens they saw. No correlation was found between having had classic abduction/sleep paralysis experiences and drawing "authentic" Grey aliens. However, those adults who had watched more television were more likely to draw aliens as Greys.

6 issues: \$35 US, \$45 elsewhere. *Skeptical Inquirer*, Box 703, Amherst, NY 14226-0703 <http://www.csicop.org>

## HOW BIG DOES THE GIANT SQUID GET?

Richard Ellis, *The Cryptozoology Review*, Vol 3, No. 1. Summer 1998.

The accepted maximum length for a giant squid (*Architeuthis*) is 55ft (17m) from tentacle tip to tail, recorded back in 1879 at Thimble Thick. Extremely rare eye-witness accounts

of living *Architeuthis* take them up to 175ft (53m), but are they reliable? Ellis himself received a letter from an ex-US Marine who, along with two others, had seen a 100+ footer off Vieques Island, Puerto Rico, in 1969.

It's always the ones that get away. Three issues: £3.16 Canada, \$14 US, US\$16 / £10 Elsewhere. From: Ben S. Roesch, 166 Pinewood Avenue, Toronto ON, Canada M6C 2V5

## THE OLDEST LABYRINTH IN THE WORLD?

Marguerite Rigoglioso, *Caerdroia, The Journal of Mazes and Labyrinths*, No. 29, 1998.

Painted in red on a Sicilian cave's 4.2ft (1.3m) high ceiling is a classic, seven-path labyrinth about 20in (50cm) across, dated to around 3000BC. A humanoid figure with raised arms faces it, holding what may be an animal horn. It's suggested that couples may have engaged in ritual sex acts beneath the red labyrinth, often a female, uterine symbol in early art. Its positioning in the secluded, cosy niche makes it best viewed while on your back.

£5 UK, £6 Europe, \$10 USA. From: *Caerdroia*, 53 Thundersley Close, Essex, SS7 3EB, UK. <http://lct.sms.soton.ac.uk/caerdroia>

**MAKING SACRIFICES**  
Roy Kerridge, *Dead of Night*, Issue 16, Aug/Sept, 1998.

Kerridge stumbles onto a voodoo-esque, syncretic West Indian ceremony in London's Shoreditch, in a building known only as "The Temple". Ganesh rubs trunks with the Virgin Mary under the Moon. There are hymns, dancing, spirit possessions – and an unlucky chicken gets the chop before a sermon on the relative merits of chicken and fish in religious custom. Vivid stuff. Six issues: £10 From: Lee Walker, 156, Bolton Rd East, New Ferry, Merseyside, L62 4RY. MARK PILKINGTON

## PHENOMENOMIX

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**Competition 54:** Susan Burton, Frome, Somerset; Alastair Boyd, Southend-on-Sea, Essex; Mike Painter, Harrow, Middlesex; Andy Jepson, Wokingham, Berks; Fiona Porter, Palmers Green, London.

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'FORTÉAN'?



**FORTÉAN TIMES** is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort. Throughout his life, Fort was sceptical about scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data was ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away (which is quite different from explaining a thing).

Fort, born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in

*The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

His dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an intermediate state between extremes. He had ideas of the universe-as-organism and the transient nature of all apparent phenomena. He coined the term 'teleportation' and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

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ently inspired to disrobe during a talent contest in Cornwall, and indeed won first prize for his performance. Now he and two fellow investigators have launched themselves on a waiting world under the guise of The Supernaturals, who perform – appropriately for ghost-hunters – dressed as, er, paratroopers. Given the physiognomy of most paranormal investigators, this is a trend strongly to be opposed; I dread to think what UFO conventions could turn into.

Regular readers will recall the delight with which the Hierophant greeted news of Bishop Sean Manchester's musical tribute to Diana. At the time I erroneously described it as "gothic jazz", prompting a letter from His Grace's legal advisor informing me that it was nothing of the sort, and indicating at some length exactly what it was. The Bishop has several new works available, including *Exorcismus*, described by his sometime musical collaborator Keith Barron as "vivid, trans-paxagonal, eerie, multi-angular, swirling"; similarly trans-paxagonal is *Pyogenic Granuloma*. However, pride of place must go to *Sean Manchester Plays The Blues*, in which "Sean Manchester's own compositions appear alongside his unique treatment of jazz standards" on tenor sax, vibraphone and sitar. Nice! All tapes are a mere £4.99 and are available from Gothic Press, PO Box 452, Highgate, London N6 6BG.

All did not go well on the recent GUST expedition to seek out monsters in Swedish lakes. Tensions within the international study team ran high, with two members complaining that the others were too keen to exploit the expedition for commercial gain. Things eventually came to a head one week into the two-week trip, with the two dissidents – our sources name FT's Daev Walsh as one – storming out of a press conference in front of the cameras. Accusations against the dissenters included, alarmingly, satanism. It's nice to see that other fortean disciplines are learning from ufology.

Look, the Hierophant is an understanding kind of guy. I know that times are hard in the old paranormal game, and that making ends meet might not come too easily. However, I'd be reluctant to take things to the lengths of Mr Paul Southcott, leader of East London's Ufology and Supernatural Society. Not long after a less-than-entirely successful night of ghost-hunting at the London Dungeon, Mr S has apparently taken up stripping. Southcott was appar-

ently a fan of *Shirley MacLaine Watch*: Still no notable news from Ms MacLaine on the world peace front; indeed, some might say that things have become significantly worse since Dr Ernesto Montgomery forecast great things for her (*FT* passim). Still, we can but wait.

Shirley MacLaine Watch: Still no notable news from Ms MacLaine on the world peace front; indeed, some might say that things have become significantly worse since Dr Ernesto Montgomery forecast great things for her (*FT* passim). Still, we can but wait.



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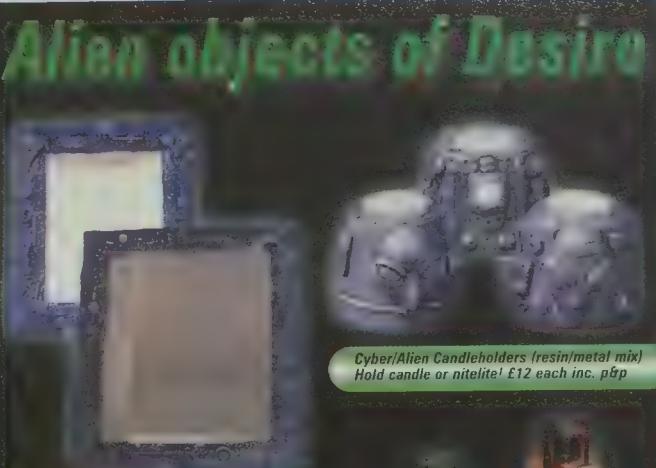
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## interview

### JOE McMONEAGLE

**Joe McMoneagle** is one of the saner survivors of 'Project Stargate', the US military experiment in clairvoyant intelligence gathering or remote viewing (RV) shut down in 1995. Now he runs his own company consulting on intuitive intelligence applications and will be in London to speak at the 'Extended Sensory Performance' seminar.

#### You were with Project Stargate from start to finish. How were you recruited?

Originally, the Army interviewed almost 1,500 military Intelligence Officers serving in the Washington area. Of those, 24 were formally briefed on the project. Fourteen of those were privately interviewed by SRI Personnel. Six were chosen for testing. I was one of those six and the first subject that nailed five out of six targets. As a result I was recruited.

#### The public was told that Stargate was shut down because its results were minor and erratic. Do you believe this?

At times we were erratic. However, my Legion of Merit citation credits me with "200 missions, addressing over 150 essential elements of information. These EEI contained critical intelligence reported at the highest echelons of our military and government, including such national level agencies as the Joint Chiefs of Staff, DIA, NSA, CIA, DEA, and the Secret Service, producing crucial and vital intelligence unavailable from any other source." So what do you think?

#### Do you think remote viewing will ever be controllable or a science?

Visit our website – [www.lfr.org](http://www.lfr.org) – and you'll see that it is a science. There are examples of simulated intelligence missions there, which show exceptional control. This kind of quality has already been replicated by numerous other labs and universities across the world.

#### What hard evidence exists for RV? Is it something anyone can experiment with?

Aside from the website above, hard evidence can also be found in issues of *The Journal of Parapsychology* (Parapsychological Association, Rhine Research Center, Durham, North Carolina NC27701-1728); a book entitled *The Cosmic Universe: The Scientific Truth of Psychic Phenomena* by Dr Dean Radin, Harper, San Francisco, California, 1997; and within my own book, *Mind Trek* (Hampton Roads Publishing, revised 1997). Anyone can experiment with RV.

#### Some of your ex-Stargate colleagues have made startling claims in print: seeing into UFOs, into alien bases on Mars, even locating life on other worlds. Is there any truth at all in such claims?

I have seen no proof. Before you accept any RV as accurate about anything, you need to verify the information in some other way. When targeted, 'alien bases' are just like buildings. You find one, you go and check it out. If it isn't there, the remote

viewer is wrong. Just because someone says something doesn't make it true, nor does accuracy on one kind of target imply accuracy on another.

**The Heaven's Gate tragedy was, to some extent, triggered by a remote viewer claiming to have seen a spaceship full of lizard people accompanying a comet. The public now associate RV with loonies. What can you do to establish RVing on a professional level that wouldn't play on public fears of some equivalent of Babylon 5's Psi Cops?**

I will continue to participate with acknowledged researchers in exploring RV. Our lab has always published in reputable journals that are open to evaluation and criticism. The Heaven's Gate tragedy is a very good example of the kinds of irresponsibility that stem from ignorance. Such a problem is not only found in the remote viewing field, it can be found anywhere. When it is, it should be pointed out and publicised. I applaud FT in such efforts by the way.

#### Are any governments undertaking 'psychic spying' today?

I believe there are some who do. Unfortunately, because of America's sensitivity to the "giggle factor," and the irresponsibility of many within the media, we aren't one of them.

#### Your second book, *The Ultimate Time Machine*, is due out soon. What do you mean by the title?

I view humankind as the ultimate time machine. Without our perceptions, there would be no such thing as time (as we understand it). In my view, we create a past according to whatever our current needs might be (political, social, or theological.) We then live and operate in the most recent rendition of that past. Future is born out of what we believe is possible. Present does not exist. If we can come to understand this, then anything is possible...

#### Does that mean that time is 'fixed'? If we change our decisions or events and therefore the future, how do you experience or distinguish the proliferation of possible futures?

No, I don't believe so. How can we alter a future that doesn't yet exist? In a realm of multiple possibilities, we eventually find ourselves experiencing only the one that's real. This places the entire burden of creation squarely on our own shoulders. If we want to live in a peaceful world, we have to build it. Our world is one of expectation and belief.

### COMPETITION 65

The 'Extended Sensory Performance' seminar will demonstrate advanced applications of neuro-linguistic programming (NLP), presented by Michael Breen with remote viewer Joe McMoneagle and bio-energy healer Seka Nikolic. It will take place between 5-9 November 1998 at Bonhill House, 1-3 Bonhill Street, London, EC2A 4BX; tickets cost £1,149 + VAT.

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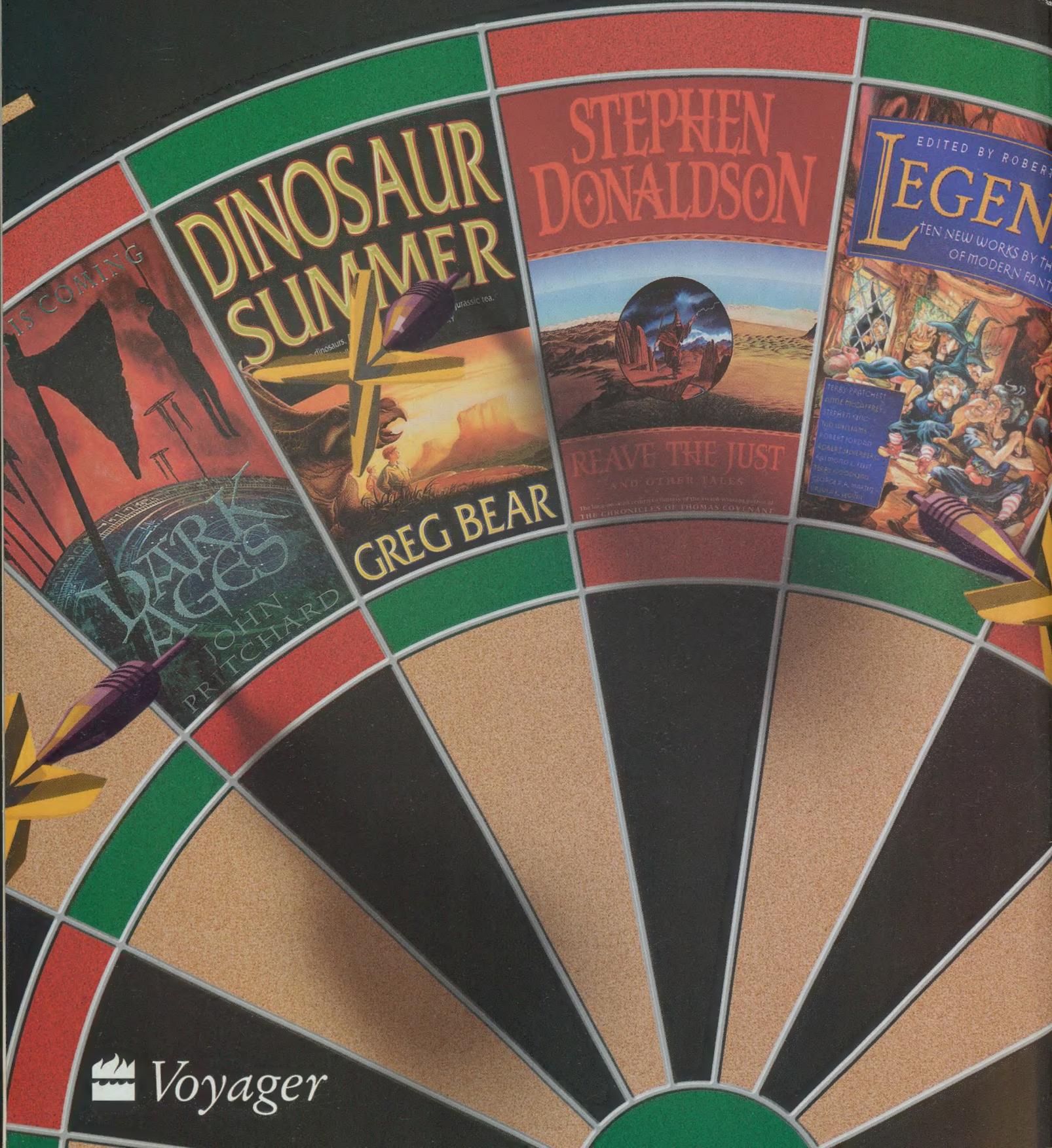
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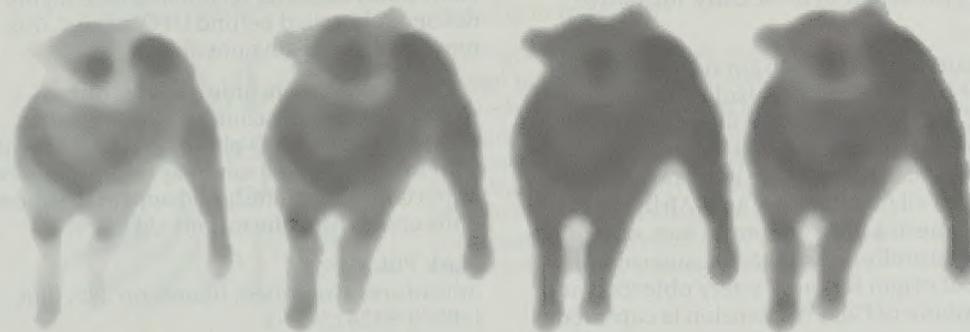
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## ANIMAL ANTIQUITIES

*There seems to be something in a fortean that loves a good animal story, whether it's frogs falling from the sky, mystery animals in the snowfields of Nepal or just cloned sheep. Fort himself collected thousands, but drew the line at a dog that said "good morning" to some passing policemen, then vanished in a puff of green smoke. Sadly, there's nothing quite so remarkable in this roundup of animal tales, but there's still plenty of weirdness.*



**C**he creators of Dolly the cloned sheep are to trademark her appearance and name in a bid to stop commercial exploitation of their work. The Roslin Institute made their application after domestic appliance manufacturers Zanussi used a picture of Dolly above the caption "The Misappliance of Science". The Institute's Assistant Director, Dr Harry Griffin, was upset because he feels that the science behind Dolly's creation has positive medical benefits. The Zanussi press office, meanwhile, claims that the "Dolly the sheep" in their ads is merely a Dolly the Sheep, not the Dolly the Sheep". *Independent*, 10 Sep 1998.

A study of chimpanzee behaviour has returned some results which show that our closest relatives can be all too human. A two-month study at Edinburgh Zoo found that when their chimps were given TVs and shown videos at regular times each day, females were more likely to watch while males wandered around the compound and worked at the enclosure's termite mound. However, after several weeks of watching the same six clips, even the regular viewers got bored. The videos, compiled from nature documentaries, showed chimps in the wild grooming and playing. *Times*, 26 May 1998.

In these days of e-mail and fax, it's nice to see traditional methods of communicating re-emerging. Enterprising South African diamond thieves have turned to carrier pigeons to carry stolen uncut diamonds out of the Alexkor mine in the northern town of Alexander Bay. Alexkor has enraged pigeon fanciers in the town of Alexander Bay by

threatening to have all pigeons near the mine shot because of the ruse, which they say is costing them 20% of their production. The success of the smugglers can be measured in an apparent rapid rise in the price of pigeons. *Times*, 6 May 1998.

Recent years have seen the revival of one of Ireland's more curious sports – bare-back shark riding. Twelve small basking sharks were captured during the annual Bluegrass Music Festival at Dunmore East, Co. Donegal, and brought back to the town's harbour, where eight men and four women competed to see who could stay on the fishes' backs longest. This year, nobody managed more than a couple of seconds. Local animal rights groups are, understandably, upset. *Munster Express*, 4 Sep 1998.

Two American neighbours met in the courtroom after one killed the other's pet cows. Snowball and Ingus, two cows owned by Darlene and Terry Davis, wandered onto land owned by Tom Dilas, Jr., who said he shot them out of fear that they would kill his children. The Davises, however, took Dilas to court, claiming that he shot the cows for their meat, as he had a butcher at his home to pick up the carcasses within half an hour. The judge eventually ruled in Dilas's favour, saying he could keep the meat. *[AP]*, 9 Sep 1998.



Photography by Lisa Anders

Joe McNally is one of Fortean Times' Contributing Editors.

## WEBBING

The *Fortean Times* team pick their favourite web sites.

**Jane Watkins**, Managing Editor

Favourite site: Zero Times

<http://www.zerotime.com/onemillion/links/index.html>

One million paranormal links

**Christine Wood**, Picture Editor

Favourite sites: Picture sources

<http://www.selectware.com/news/>

<http://www.webwombat.com.au/intercom/newsprs>

Links pages for worldwide newspapers are a godsend. Both are excellent for finding or tracking down obscure news services and stories. And webwombat is worth a mention just for the name!

**Etienne Gilfillan**, Art Director

Favourite site: Stay Tooned

<http://www.staytooned.com/film/>

A visual feast – lots of information and trailers on upcoming animation films.

**John Innes**, Associate Publisher

Favourite site: Excite

<http://www.excite.com>

Full of all the latest news stories, with everything from political to paranormal.

**Mike Dash**, Publisher

Favourite site: Metacrawler

<http://www.metacrawler.com/>

Polls results from seven other engines to produce perhaps the most comprehensive searches available on the net. Plus intriguing features such as MetaSpy which allows you to see what other net users are hunting for – a great source of off-the-wall ideas.

**Mark Pilkington**, Contributing

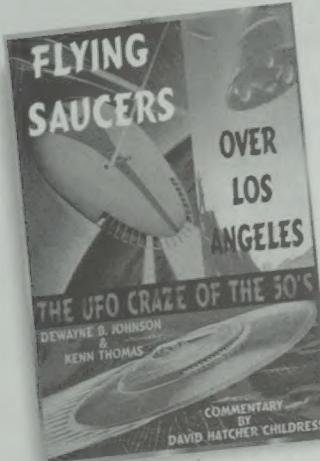
Editor Favourite site: UFO Updates mailing list archive

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The newspaper accounts cover many familiar cases – Arnold, Mantell, Roswell, Maury Island, Aztec – but include plenty of less familiar reports that, reliable or not, demonstrate how the motifs of the later UFO literature were already prevalent in these early, formative years.

It's hard for us today to appreciate what an impact the flying saucers had at the time, not just in America, but across the whole world – they were, perhaps, the first instance of a truly global media frenzy. There are reports from countries all over Europe, Asia, Africa and South America. Everywhere, in fact, except the USSR, naturally one of the first suspected places of origin for the mystery objects. The atmosphere of Cold War tension is captured

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# FLYING SAUCERS OVER LOS ANGELES

## DEWAYNE B. JOHNSON & KENN THOMAS

vividly by the book as the USAF attempts to discount the possibility that Russia may have had technologies that the US didn't.

The cases for both extraterrestrial and man-made origins for the saucers are given plenty of coverage. It seems very little has changed since 1950 – landings, contacts, anti-gravity drives, parallel universes, ancient astronauts, secret military aircraft, they're all here except, unsurprisingly, for the abductions. One interesting line of enquiry examined by Johnson is that some of the objects were unmanned, high speed drones used in target practice for planes and missiles. With what we know today of secret reconnaissance flights deliberately veiled behind UFO stories, this remains a tantalising possibility.

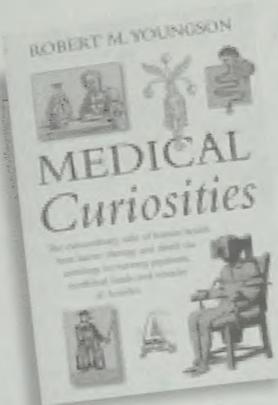
Added bonuses include a colour photo section of rare magazine and book covers, plenty of classic UFO photos and an appendix of Johnson's original newspaper clippings. An important book that should appeal to saucer buffs and cultural historians alike.

**Mark Pilkington**  
Adventures Unlimited, Illinois pp 280, illus.  
ISBN 0-932813-54-2



# MEDICAL CURIOSITIES

## ROBERT M. YOUNGSON



This is an excellent miscellany of medical forteana, mostly gleaned from "reputable medical journals" just like FTs regular Medical Bag.

There are impressive accounts of the human body's amazing tendency to turn all unwanted matter into stone, just like an oyster, but on a much larger scale. Here you can read about a traumatised eyeball turning into chalk; or a calcified something (perhaps a fatty tumour) inside the pelvis of a Bavarian soldier who died in 1760; even calcified faeces. And what about the 10 inch, 14 ounce bladder stone which worked its way through a small wound before crashing to the floor?

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This book records much, much more: foreign bodies in the brain, discharged through the nose; inept suicide attempts by nail-gun and car exhausts depleted of lethal carbon monoxide by catalytic converters; wolf children; death by domestic cat or jelly-fish. You can read about the deranged professor of surgery in Berlin who, forced into retirement by colleagues carried on

"operating" under local anaesthetic in his own kitchen – less than 50 years ago!

Should you suffer from urinary problems, it's always better to seek medical advice than have a go yourself. If, however, you wish to emulate a certain Scottish shepherd and dilate your urethral stricture with a handy dead viper, it pays to remember that the scales all run in one direction. If the reptile is introduced the wrong way up, it will inevitably fall into the bladder and require surgical extraction. Oh yes, and never try to cure incontinence by pushing a dried bean up the urethra – it can give a whole new meaning to the phrase "a growth in the bladder."

Not all the tales are fortean, but all are fascinating. Did you know that "Mogadon" got its name by being tested first on moggies?

**Nick Warren**  
Robinson, 1997. Pb £6.99 pp371, bib.  
ISBN 1-854879-02-2

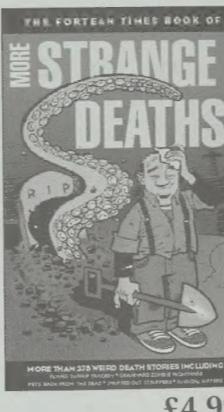
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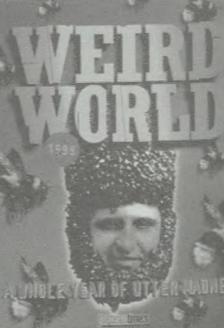
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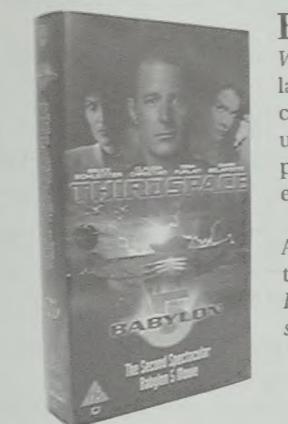


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## BABYLON 5: THIRDSpace

Warner Home Video have given us 5 copies of the latest Babylon 5 movie to give away. In *Thirdspace* the crew of Babylon 5 discover a mysterious artifact of unknown origin. The artifact influences the minds of people aboard the station and endangers the lives of everyone aboard.

All you have to do to enter the competition is answer the following question:  
*Babylon 5* lead Bruce Boxleitner starred in which 80's series with former Charlie's Angel Kate Jackson?

- Ⓐ Scarecrow & Mrs King
- Ⓑ Cagney & Lacey
- Ⓒ Dempsey & Makepeace

This is a joint promotion run by *Fortean Times* and Warner Home Video. Answers on a postcard to: Fortflash Competition, *Fortean Times*, John Brown Publishing, 136-142 Bramley Road, London, W10 6SR. The closing date is 12 December 1998. *Thirdspace* is available now from all good video retail outlets at a RRP of £14.99.

**Competition Results** In the Godzilla competition in *Fortflash* 12, we asked you to name Godzilla's baby sidekick. Sending in the correct answer were the following winners, your limited edition credit card radios are on their way... Morgan Shaw, Glasgow; Jon Hancock, Hove; Andrew Archibald, Beverley; Christopher Jackson, London; Chris Bell, Sheffield; C Anderson, Flintshire; Martin Collins, Great Yarmouth; D Lowe, Nottingham; Sharon Cranna, Aberdeen; and Vivien Hogg, Leeds.

## COMPETITION

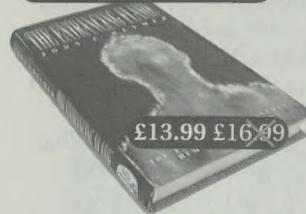


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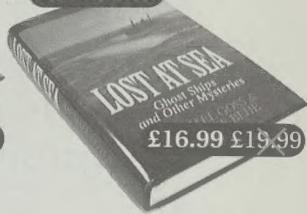
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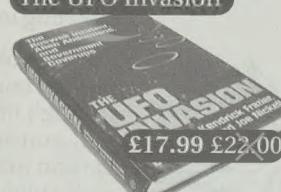
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